NEW STATESMAN

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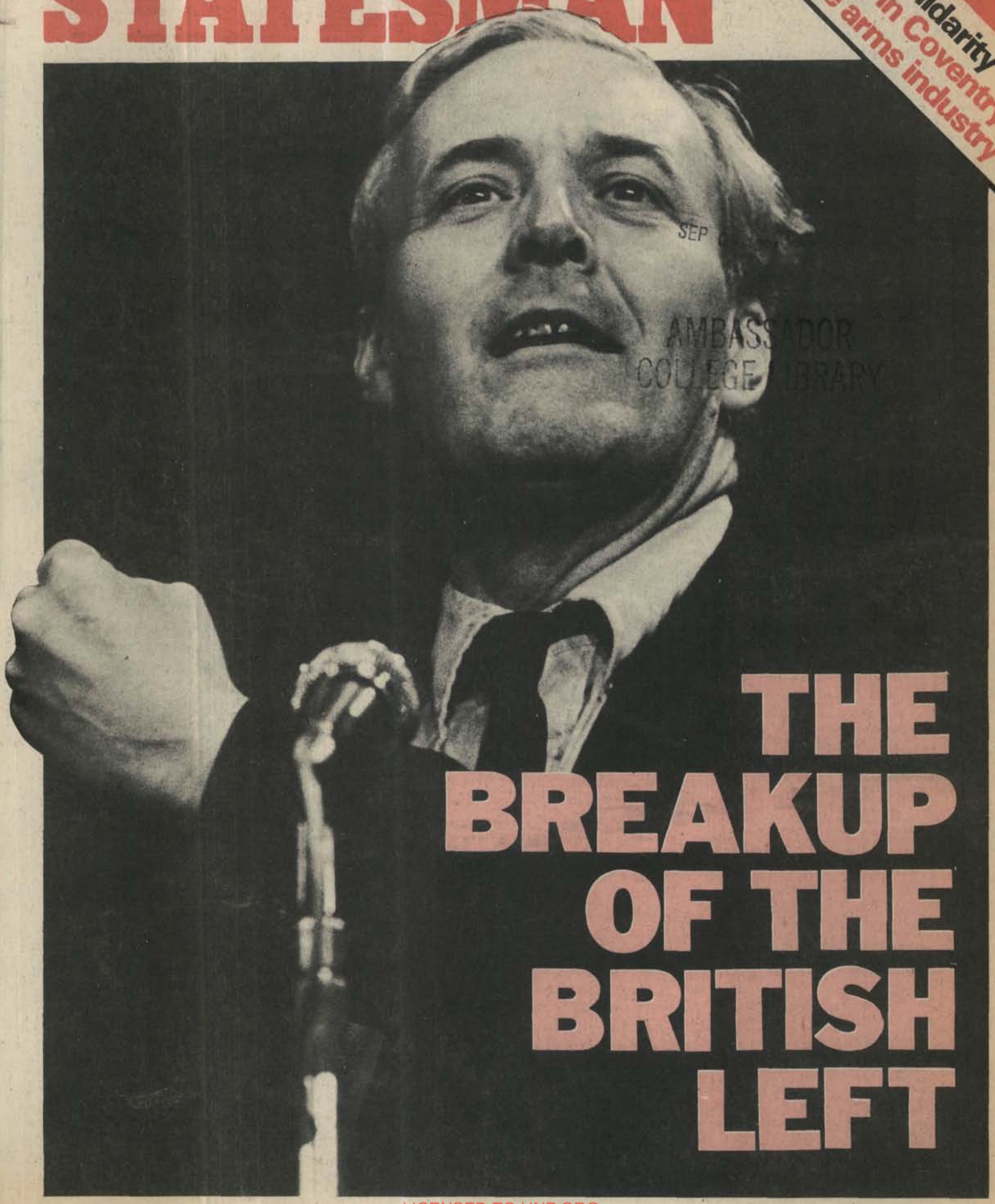
The political press — then and now



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THE BREAKUP OF THE BRITISH LEFT

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NEW STATESMAN Vol 101 No 2621 12 June 1981

Cover photo: Chris Davies (Network)

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Tony Benn and the Inside Left

AS MICHAEL FOOT'S outspoken attack on Tony Benn last week makes clear, the contest for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party has now become a battle for overall control. But even Mr Foot has understated the crisis facing the democratic left.

Of the two main deputy leadership candidates, Denis Healey cannot achieve legitimacy among the party's constituency members, and evokes little enthusiasm from trade-union organisers; while Tony Benn cannot achieve legitimacy among his colleagues in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Whoever wins in September, the party will be seriously damaged by the demonstration of that fact. No party of the left can hope to flourish unless it can combine, in some reasonably free alliance, the three elements of Parliamentary representation, trade union organisation and constituency activism.

Those who differ with that view properly belong, on one side, to organisations of the revolutionary left or, on the other side, to the Social Democrats. We seek, more than most on the committed left, to give the Social Democrats a fair hearing. But their message adds up to an avoidance of the issues that matter. They deal with the problem of trade-union democracy by excluding unions from the political process; they sidestep potential challenges from party activists by proposing a form of plebiscitory democracy. The SDP offers no cure for the disorders afflicting Britain's left: rather, it is another symptom of those disorders.

WITHIN THE Labour Party the difficulty that the constituency left must face is this. They have pinned their faith to Tony Benn, mostly because they genuinely support the policies he espouses. But many socialist MPs, people who support those same policies, have observed Mr Benn for a number of years at close quarters and do not trust him. Mr Benn's supporters would argue that such people are faint-hearted compromisers — a species not exactly uncommon at Westminster. For ourselves, we do not think it credible that socialists such as Robin Cook, Frank Field, Jeff Rooker or Neil Kinnock can be explained away like that.

Yet Mr Benn's supporters do have a point. Their ranks may be enlivened by a few careerists, fanatics and outright anti-democrats. But Benn's campaign would have been stillborn were there not many honest people who have learned, through unhappy experience, that the rhetoric that leading Labour politicians address to their rank-and-file is — routinely — betrayed by Labour's performance in office.

The nomination of John Silkin does not resolve this problem. He is one of a number of Labour MPs (like Peter Shore and Gerald Kaufman) who is well regarded by many of his colleagues, but evokes little enthusiasm outside. He may well pick up the votes of 80 to 100 MPs in the first ballot; but unless some remarkable and, frankly, undemocratic arm-twisting of union delegations takes place, he will be eliminated from the run-off. It will then be a straight choice: Benn or Healey. The non-Bennite left will be able to duck the issues posed by the rival candidates no longer.

PERSONALITIES ASIDE, there is nothing to prevent a committed left-winger from treating Denis Healey with respect, as a substantial Parliamentary performer, and a vote-winner on the hustings. He was, it is true, a bad chancellor, but few members of the last Labour cabinet, and certainly not Tony Benn, can claim a record of unbroken triumph.

Yet to vote to give Mr Healey victory now, even for the tactical reason of blocking Benn, would in practice make Healey heir-apparent to Foot. If there is one thing more likely to wreck the Labour Party than two decades of Wilson/Callaghan rule, it is three decades of Wilson/Callaghan/Healey rule.

So the problem that confronts Labour's left is how to oppose Mr Benn by methods that do not put their political credit at the disposal of Mr Healey. As a start they must state their position publicly, not by way of whispered asides to the press. (In our inquiries we have been struck by the number of left-wing MPs who candidly explain their dilemma arising from their deep distrust of Mr Benn — but who decline to be quoted by name.) There are some honourable exceptions, such as Frank Field. If others were now to follow, especially in the wake of Mr Foot's *demarche,* it would start to demonstrate to the left outside Westminster what most of the left inside Westminster has rumbled: that Mr Benn has many talents, and is far from the ogre depicted in the national media — but his personal qualities and his record as a practical socialist would make him a disastrous party leader or deputy leader.

Left-wing MPs need to say now, clearly and unambiguously, that they will refuse to vote for either Mr Benn or Mr Healey should Mr Silkin be eliminated. The case for abstaining in such a crucial vote is by no means easy to make, especially as there is no way even massive abstentions could prevent a victor emerging from the second ballot. But what a public, planned and large-scale abstention could do is deny whoever does win the legitimacy to speak for more than his particular block of loyalists. It would give both the right and left the signal that they need to seek new nominees for the eventual succession to the leadership. It is a dangerous option. But in the present condition of the Labour Party, danger is not optional — and the Labour movement was not built, in the first place, by people who played for safety. Today, the tolerant but committed left has, if it will recognise it, the best opportunity in many years to set in motion a process that could produce a party both popular with the electorate and effectively radical in office. □

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Hugh Dennis reports on the pay dispute which has become a political confrontation

Will Thatcher break the civil service unions?

A NATIONAL civil servants strike now seems likely — the final decision will be taken at a meeting of the Council of Civil Service Unions next Thursday 18 June. This will be a critical test of the unions, whose strategy so far has failed and who are uncertain about what to do next.

Industrial action by civil servants became inevitable last October when the government suspended the work of the Pay Research Unit, the key part of the system of fixing civil service pay by comparison with the private sector.

This year the nine civil service unions decided to unite — as they have never done before — behind a claim drawn up by the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) for a 15 per cent increase, with a minimum of £10, and a restoration of the comparability exercise in future years.

The national executives of the unions decided on a strategy of selective industrial action — which has now been going on for 14 weeks — because this had succeeded in 1979 against the Callaghan government's 5 per cent pay policy. But then the unions faced a government with an insecure parliamentary majority preparing for an election. This time they face a government with a secure parliamentary majority and the support of the major financial institutions. Despite the significant publicity value of some of the action, the selective strikes have failed: government revenue has not been stopped and the dispute has escalated into a major political confrontation.

Many activists never believed they could succeed: they saw the 1979 action as a failure, as it did not secure the original claim and involved only a small number of members. As this dispute has dragged on — in 1979 the action lasted for eight weeks — even full-time union officials have begun to voice criticism of the lack of effective leadership nationally.

Strike hits dole offices

Chris Davies and Mike Abrahams (Network)

References to the full claim have now almost disappeared from official union literature and last week union leaders were willing to accept an 8 per cent offer — the opening offer was 7 per cent — with the promise of talk about comparability. However, this proposal, devised by Lord Soames, has been overruled by the Prime Minister.

The unions cannot afford to finance selective action — the 5,000 strikers are on 85 per cent of full pay — for more than another three weeks: the special levy brings in only £300,000 a week, compared with a strike bill of over £½ million. The CPSA, whose members are particularly disillusioned with the selective action, is now contributing only £30,000 a week. To avoid an ignominious defeat an all-out strike is now the only option.

Some activists have been demanding this all along, especially the influential Broad Left in the Society of Professional and Civil Servants and the CPSA, where they formulated the original 15 per cent claim. Locally, activists have been able to take control of industrial action through the 40 specially-formed joint union committees. Some union leaders now feel that they have created a 'Frankenstein monster' in allowing these committees to be set up: many of them will remain in being after the strike.

Last Saturday, to the alarm of union general secretaries, over 100 activists, representing joint committees across the country, met in Manchester to organise the campaign to win the support of the members for an all-out strike. The predominantly right-wing executive of the CPSA is only just catching up with the mood of these members.

There is already significant division within the CPSA and the SCPS over the selective action in the Department of Employment and the DHSS, which is affecting the computer which pays benefit. Under pressure from the TUC — who were worried about the adverse publicity — these unions' executives agreed to an emergency procedure to pay benefit. But what this means is that the burden of the work of writing out giro-cheques by hand falls on members lower down the union structure, who are increasingly unwilling to implement the emergency procedures.

Of the five major unions, only the Institute of Professional Civil Servants is now explicitly opposed to the strike. Leaders of the other unions are consulting their members, again, on what should now be done (with the exception of the small Civil Service Union, which has decided to go for an all-out strike without further consultation). As continuing the selective action is not financially practicable, and calling the action off would be major defeat, a strike seems the only option, given the undoubted determination of those already involved.

Richard Kinsey on an experiment in taping interrogations

Police cut question time

DETAILS OF a unique and potentially embarrassing experiment in tape-recording police interrogations are beginning to emerge from the Scottish Office. The largest experiment of its kind to have been undertaken in this country, its purpose is to assess the value of tape recording in three major areas of concern: as a protection for the individual and the police in cases of alleged malpractice; as a means of ascertaining the reliability of voluntary statements and confessions obtained under questioning; and as an aid to judicial scrutiny and control of police interrogation.

In May 1980 equipment was installed in police stations in Falkirk and Dundee. Care was taken to prevent tampering and to record in triplicate. Recording was limited to interrogations of adults involved in more serious offences handled by the CID and likely to be sent for trial at the Sheriff or High Courts. What makes the experiment so unique is that interrogations have been recorded in full. The Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure in England and Wales took the view that this would prove impractical, and recommended that recording be confined to the suspect's final statement after arrest and charge. A substantial number of interrogations of people 'helping the police with their inquiries' (i.e. those questioned before arrest and charge) have also been taped in full.

Over 1,000 interrogations have now been recorded. An interim report on the first six months' research findings was available to Ministers at the end of last year, but was not made public. A further report is being prepared. In a written answer to a parliamentary question on 31 March this year, it was confirmed that the experiment showed 'no insuperable technical difficulties in the actual recording of police interrogation.' In line with the conclusions of the Royal Commission, it seems that worries over security, cost and technical efficiency have proved groundless.

At the same time, the Commission's fears that a huge amount of superfluous information would be recorded, and that transcription would present inordinate problems, do not appear to be supported. The tape-recording experiment has apparently led to a reduction in the length of interrogations from an average of about three-quarters of an hour, to 10 minutes. This suggests that police are less inclined to pursue questioning than they are when notebooks provide the only record.

It was admitted through the Scottish Information Office last week that since the High Court decision in the case of Peter McFadden last August, the number of taped interrogations has itself fallen dramatically — by more than 50 per cent. It seems that police have ceased to cooperate with the guidelines they were given as to which interviews should be recorded.

In the case of McFadden, who was accused of murder, a tape recording of an interview with him in Dundee Police station was produced in court by the prosecution. Lord Jauncey ruled that the evidence of statements made by the accused was inadmissible. The tape disclosed that police questioning had proceeded unfairly and had at times amounted to a cross-examination sufficient to taint the whole interview. (It is for this reason, of course, that it is essential to tape the complete interrogation.)

Since the decision, the police have not disguised their dissatisfaction with both tape recording and the rules of admissibility. It has been reported that in Dundee and Falkirk recording is now avoided wherever possible.

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Chris Mullin delves into back numbers of *Tribune* and uncovers the passionate promise of Labour's leader in his younger days

A word in your ear, Mr Benn

The reconstruction of the Labour Party, to make it fit for the early recapture and exercise of power, cannot be done on the basis of policies which failed . . . To say that does not mean lopping off particular heads or engaging in mass assassinations . . . But it does mean that the Party, starting with the Parliamentary Labour Party, should insist that the leadership over the next few years of reconstruction should not consist solely of the 1970 Cabinet that led us to defeat . . . What is needed is a strong shift leftwards. The Party in Parliament ought to start that process and, if it won't the Party conference will have to do it for them.

MICHAEL FOOT wrote those words in *Tribune* in July 1970, when he had just declared his candidacy for the Deputy leadership. His opponent was Roy Jenkins, who had just been Chancellor in a disastrous Labour government.

No-one argued that Foot was being divisive. But voting in 1970 was confined to MPs, and there was no prospect that the anti-Establishment candidate might indeed *win*. Nobody suggested that Foot was an ambitious fanatic even though he contested the Deputy Leadership in 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1976.

Other ironies may be found in the present Leader's career.

The paper that condemns ALL H-bomb tests

TRIBUNE

Labour's Independent Weekly

SIXPENCE

YOUR LETTERS see page 8

OCTOBER 6, 1961

The man they gagged speaks out—

THE RANK-AND-FILE SOCIALISTS STAND FIRM

by MICHAEL FOOT

Labour's new defence policy

KEEPING NATO NUCLEAR

by MICHAEL FOOT

MICHAEL FOOT What's wanted: a big shift Leftwards

In March 1961 he was one of 24 MPs who voted against the air defence estimates in defiance of a Shadow Cabinet decision. Justifying himself in *Tribune* (17 March), he minced no words:

> If the Party is serious in opposing the independent nuclear deterrent . . . it should do so boldly, openly, all along the line. To oppose one week and to pack up the next gets the worst of both worlds.

Today, Mr Foot orders Labour MPs to abstain in the face of a vote on unilateral nuclear disarmament, and seeks to admonish one of 74 rebels who broke the official line. Perhaps his view is that public opinion in 1981 isn't ready to support unilateral nuclear disarmament. But this was his view in 1961:

> The excuse is often advanced that a vote against the defence estimates may be misunderstood (as meaning) the Labour Party is against all defence . . . The real danger of misunderstanding arises differently. If the Labour leadership fights so half-heartedly on the issue, then the public may draw the conclusion that the leadership is half-hearted . . . That is certainly not the way to persuade the nation.

Mr Foot's watchword of today, 'unity', seemed less potent 20 years ago:

> . . . the creation of a real fighting Socialist Opposition preparing public opinion for the return of a real socialist government (cannot) be achieved by pronouncing the magic word 'unity'. (*Tribune* 12 May)

Labour's official defence policy then rested on *Policy for Peace*, a document which included Hugh Gaitskell and Denis Healey among its authors. Under the heading 'Keeping NATO nuclear', Foot dealt with it thus:

> Many Labour leaders, notably Denis Healey . . . know the appalling risks involved in the mere presence of these tactical nuclear weapons in Europe . . . and yet in the Gaitskell-Healey document these risks are accepted in preference to what most people would consider the much smaller risk that the removal of these weapons would invite a conventional Russian attack.

Mr Healey's views remain largely the same, but Mr Foot's have altered. *The Times*, on 5 May 1981, reported on its front page that 'Healey backs Tories on defence':

> In a remarkably clear pronouncement of Labour Party policy on nuclear weapons, disarmament and unilateralism, Mr Denis Healey, deputy leader of the Labour Party, showed yesterday that he had convincingly won the bitter battle in the Shadow Cabinet over these issues . . . With Mr Foot, well-known for his unilateralist views, seated on the Front Bench beside him . . . Mr Healey said there was not a great deal of difference over the main thrust of Sir Ian Gilmour's review of foreign policy between the Opposition front bench . . . and Lord Carrington.

What can Mr Foot's former followers conclude, except that in the surreal atmosphere of the House of Commons, he has become the captive of the very forces that he once so passionately opposed? In 1961, he lost the Whip for repeated defiance of the Shadow Cabinet's line on defence. Following the Right's failure at Conference to unseat left-wing members of the NEC, Michael Foot wrote a front-page *Tribune* article under the head: 'The man they gagged speaks out — the rank-and-file socialists stand firm.' Hugh Gaitskell, he said, had been given

> clear, fresh evidence that the easy victories he gains in private meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party are not representative of the constituency parties on whom the chief burden must fall in the winning of an election. A wise leader would recognise this simple truth.

Helena Cobban on the Israeli attack on Iraq's nuclear installation

Begin bombs Arabs into unity

THE ISRAELI bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor may not have had much effect on Iraqi plans to produce an atomic bomb: one expert says it has probably set back such long-term plans as the Iraqis might have, only by 'a matter of months'. The greater effect may prove, in the medium term, to be on the overall power balance in the Middle East — an equation in which political as well as purely military factors must be considered.

Until now, the Americans, Israelis and Egyptians have been able to weather the tremendous Arab opposition to the bilateral Israeli-Egyptian 'peace process' mainly by exploiting to the full the many rifts between the various Arab opponents. Rival Baathist regimes in Iraq and Syria reverted from a brief flirtation in late 1978 to their traditional hostility in 1979; the Saudis and Libyans clashed in a furious war of words and broke off relations with each other; then the Iraqis and Iranians went to war.

This degeneration of the anti-Camp David front has now been halted by two major developments in recent weeks, both of them provoked by Mr Begin's flouting of the norms of international behaviour. First, he staked his claim to the 'freedom of the skies' over Lebanon and sparked the Syrian missile crisis. Now, showing what he means by that 'freedom' and causing an unknown number of casualties inside Iraq, he has drawn his Arab opponents yet closer together and severely embarrassed Egypt, which has been trying discreetly to re-open links with Iraq in recent months.

King Khaled, of Saudia Arabia, previously apprehensive about Iraqi nuclear developments, is in Paris this week pressing for quick French repairs to the damage. Syria is repaying Iraqi promises of solidarity given in the heat of its own missile crisis. Arab Foreign Ministers are to meet in Baghdad. Thus, Mr Begin is forcing Camp David's critics to bury their differences, while straining the Camp David alliance itself. And by pulling off such a *coup de theatre* at this stage in his own election campaign he has probably ensured that his own policies will be Israel's over the next four years.

However, even were the Arabs to bury their internecine hatchets and put up a real display of solidarity, they would still have to face the ultimate sanction of Israel's own nuclear potential, sadly submerged in most reporting of the latest events. Decade-old CIA assessments put the potential of Israel's Dimona plant at thirteen A-bombs; one assumes it has not actually decreased since then. The Iraqis not only receive compliments from the International Atomic Energy Authority for their safeguards and procedures and are signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty — last year they actually chaired the Non-Proliferation Conference in Geneva. Israel, on the other hand obtained its original stocks of uranium through open piracy, and refuses to allow any international regulation of its nuclear programme.

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LABOUR PARTY

The Left versus the Left

In the current race for election, Tony Benn's candidacy has eclipsed those of both his rivals. The pros and cons of Mr Healey and Mr Silkin excite no interest at all, and on the Left the debate is conducted entirely in terms of the virtues and faults of Mr Benn. BRUCE PAGE and PETER KELLNER report.

DISORDER commonly accompanies the Labour movement's fraternal disputes, but all records have been surpassed during the past few days. For instance:

● On Monday, Denis Healey denounced as a 'Militant polytechnic lecturer' the middle-aged Tribunite, Bob Wareing, who managed to remove the Liverpool Derby nomination from Eric Ogden MP. Healey may or may not have been aware of Ogden's frankly reactionary record (for details, see below). He presumably can't have been aware that Wareing had just lost the chairmanship of his own constituency party through the operations of a Militant putsch;

● Since last week, the proponents of Tony Benn and open democracy have been congratulating themselves on the process by which they have — as they believe —ensured that the mighty block vote of the Transport & General Workers Union will be cast on their man's side come autumn. This they have done by using the classic devices of the smoke-filled room to exclude from the decision the rank-and-file of the nation's largest union, thus making their champion of democracy look about as convincing as Margaret Thatcher with a CND badge on her lapel;

● Within the Gothic environs of Westminster, John Silkin's friends are now congratulating themselves upon having the only candidate who can bear upon a stricken field the banner of pure, disinterested socialism. The word was issued to the *New Statesman* in the following seductive form: 'One of John's advantages is that he's wealthy enough to employ a decent staff to run a decent campaign.'

Confusion, complicated by emotional exhaustion, is now the dominant condition of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and it must be a question whether they can pull themselves together in time to make sense of their predicament. This was put to us, in lapidary form, by a left-winger who carries as much weight in the Shadow Cabinet as any other individual:

> If Tony carries on as he's doing now, I can't support him. But I'm one of those people who could never vote for Denis, because if I tried, my arm would drop off.

WHERE TO START wrestling with this tangled skein? As good a place as any, because it gives some index of the sheer lousiness of the regular press accounts, is the business of reselection. There may be some cases in which this is a contest between the Jabberwock and the Frabjous Boy of pure democracy — but most of the action so far concerns the long-overdue reform of thoroughly rotten boroughs.

There is nothing pleasant about seeing Eric Ogden, a man of 57, deprived of a job he has held since 1964. But did the newspapers which were so assiduous in reporting the non-existent pro-Soviet speeches of Albert Bore — successor in the Ladywood constituency, see Letters, p15 — give their readers any idea of Mr Ogden's record?

Apropos the thalidomide case, Mr Ogden, a paid adviser to the Pharmaceutical Society, once observed:

> To keep a balanced debate, we should put on record that thalidomide has done many people a great deal of good.*

In 1968, he voted to end free school milk at secondary level. He ignored his constituency's opposition to NHS charges, yet employed a private consultant when his own son needed a tonsillectomy. He voted for the famous £6 wage limit: at the time, he condemned a proposal that MPs should receive a rise of £24 a week, but his reason for doing so was that he thought the appropriate sum would be £70.

In 1972, he toured Rhodesia as a guest of the Ogden Tobacco Company — no relation — and returned to speak out against the sanctions policy. The rebel regime, he thought, ought to be dealt with by 'investment and persuasion'. When this, and his journeyings in South Africa as a guest of the frankly propagandist South Africa Foundation were brought to light, Mr Ogden attempted, unsuccessfully, to invoke the Parliamentary Privileges Committee against it. Summarising his own political credo, he said:

> When I came to the House, I thought I was a left-winger. I have been pushed by circumstances so far to the right that I have come to think there was only Woodrow Wyatt between me and the extremity of the right.

It is not remarkable that Mr Ogden should have lost a Labour nomination. What is remarkable is that he should have retained one for so long.

For certain, there will be more unseatings as the summer wears on. And we may, at this point, pause for a commercial: any Labour MP who can claim to be the victim of hijackers, whether they act in the name of Leon Trotsky or anyone else, can assume that the columns of the *New Statesman* are available for his or her defence.

But inevitably, every constituency battle will take place against a background of distrust which has been steadily building up in the Labour movement since Harold Wilson began, in the 1960s, the process of dealing with the left by force and fraud, rather than by honest argument and confrontation. (*Now* he tells us that he never intended to bring down Ian Smith in 'weeks rather than months'?)

There is scarcely a man or woman in the Labour movement who doubts the personal honesty of Michael Foot. But there are very many who fail to understand the process which Chris Mullin anatomises on page 4 this week. We give Mullin that space and prominence, not because we concur in his arguments — he certainly would disapprove of our leader — but because we believe that his question deserves an answer.

Chris Davies (Network)

The man with front-page appeal

*This was pure propaganda: thalidomide was a drug of marginal therapeutic value, marketed on claims of 'safety' which were based on assertion, rather than research.

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PART OF FOOT's problem is that the power of the Benn bandwagon was recognised too late — not only by most MPs, but by most outside observers. Yet from the beginning a few left-wing MPs did see the danger signals. As the contest has developed, both the Bennite left and the anti-Benn left have been gathering their forces. One outcome already has been the deepest rift within the Tribune group that its members can recall.

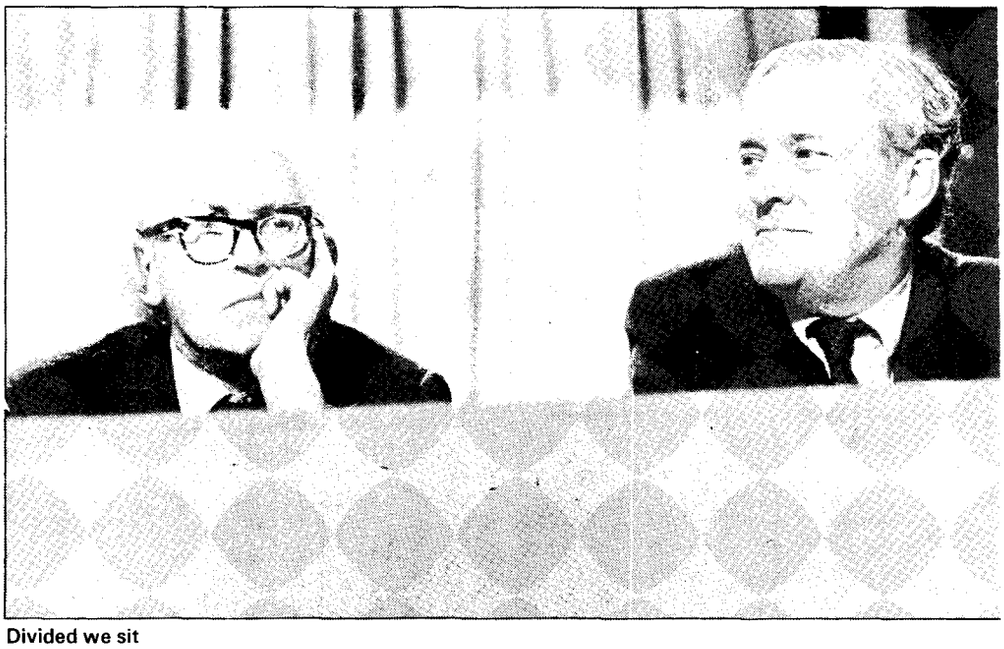
Until late March it was widely assumed — or hoped — that Benn would not stand for the deputy leadership. But as word got round in the last weekend of the month that Benn was seeking nomination signatures, a group of younger Tribune MPs, led by Robin Cook, Alf Dubbs, John Garrett, Robert Kilroy-Silk and Jeff Rooker, attempted to stop him. They asked Ian Mikardo, Tribune's chairman, to arrange a meeting to discuss whether *any* Tribune MP should stand against Healey. Implicitly, they were proposing that Benn should not declare himself before such a discussion.

On the night of 1 April, Benn heard of these plans in the Commons tea-room. To pre-empt them he declared his candidacy at 3.30 the following morning.

The young Tribunites then switched tack. Having failed to ensure that *no* Tribunite stood, they sought an *alternative* Tribunite candidate to rival Benn. Neil Kinnock was their first choice: fiery enough to appeal to the left, popular enough at Westminster to win the votes of a fair number of MPs, and young enough not to be tainted by Labour's failures in office. But Kinnock declined. He was too new to the shadow cabinet, also it would be unfair on his family.

Eric Heffer was tried next. At first he was keen. Like Kinnock his left-wing appeal was undoubted, and his political *curriculum vitae* included the fact that he had been sacked from the last Labour government rather than toe the cabinet line on the Common Market. (Benn has never resigned, or been sacked, from anything.)

Heffer, however, found he had a problem. His current power base in the party is the constituency section in national executive elections. And when he made inquiries with his Liverpool constituency about their view of his standing for the deputy leadership, he was told that his local party would strongly disapprove of any action that split the left vote and weakened Benn's chances. If Heffer persisted, his local party might decline to nominate him for next year's national executive. In those circumstances, Heffer's career on the national executive could well be finished. Heffer decided not to take the risk.



Chris Davies (Network)

Divided we sit

Joan Lestor was also tried as an alternative candidate; but then she found her local party cool towards the idea, and she declined the offer.

BY MID-MAY the anti-Benn left was in something approaching disarray. While it was seeking, but not finding, an alternative left candidate, the Benn campaign was making considerable progress. Benn himself has toured a number of union conferences, both winning delegates to his side, and securing considerable publicity for his cause. Most significantly he narrowly secured the block vote of the white-collar union ASTMS, against the passionately-given advice of its General Secretary, Clive Jenkins. And if he could outflank Clive Jenkins, there were many other unions, with less dominating leaderships, that might fall into his lap. The outside chance that Benn could actually beat Healey had now become a real possibility.

Reluctant contenders: Eric Heffer, Joan Lestor, Neil Kinnock

At 10.30 pm on 18 May, the veteran Tribune MP Judith Hart invited anti-Benn left-wing MPs to a meeting to try and finally decide on an alternative candidate. More than 20 MPs turned up. Stan Orme spoke first. 'We need to put up an alternative candidate from the left', he said, 'and if nobody else will stand, I shall. But I think it would be better if John (Silkin) stood. He has a good chance of getting the T&G vote, and therefore of doing well in the election.' (Silkin is sponsored as an MP by the Transport workers' union, which has one-fifth of all union block votes in the Labour Party.)

Silkin replied by saying that if he was pushed to stand he would do so. Coyly, he backed into the ring. Frank Field spoke up: 'John, if you want to stand, say so. There's nothing dishonourable about saying frankly that you want to be deputy leader of the Labour Party.' And so the left-wing anti-Benn campaign finally got off the ground.

BUT IF THE REACTION against Benn's campaign has been halting and disorganised, it has nonetheless been intensely felt, and remains so. What is it founded on?

Obviously, there are some confusing phenomena to be stripped away. First, anyone who advocates nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from the EEC and large-scale intervention against the excesses of the capitalist market will routinely become a hate-figure in the Tory press. And within the Labour movement, the right and centre will oppose such a candidate for perfectly orthodox reasons of policy disagreement.

They, however, would not vote for *any* left-wing candidate. The source of bitterness that has finally resulted in Silkin's candidacy does not, in general, stem from policy differences. On withdrawal from the Common Market, for example, Silkin has a longer and more consistent record than Benn.

In part, Benn's opponents are making a tactical judgment: he is fighting the wrong battle at the wrong time. According to Judith Hart, 'his candidacy is jeopardising the political gains that the left have made. If Denis wins, the right will be back in charge.' On this view, there will be more favourable grounds in future for fighting the right; meanwhile Benn should bide his time.

But for many of Benn's left-wing opponents there is a more fundamental criticism. It involves the role of the party's right-wing: are they partners to be accommodated or rivals to be beaten? There are, naturally, some issues where the nature of the decision means that one or other side must finally prevail — for example over the siting of Cruise Missiles in Britain. But Benn's left-wing opponents argue that there are many issues — including, centrally, economic policy — in which some form of constructive dialogue with the right is both possible and

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desirable. If Benn himself were to be electrocuted by a badly-wired microphone tomorrow, the split inside the Tribune group between the ecumenical and sectarian approaches to Labour's broad church would continue.

That said, there is also a particular, highly personal reason why many left-wing MPs do not want Tony Benn as deputy leader. They simply do not trust him. This goes beyond the standard, healthy suspicion that attaches to anyone who trades in power. There is in truth a solid body of testimony against Tony Benn, the deputy-leadership candidate, and most of it centres upon claims of a roughly similar description. He is said to rewrite history. He is said to oversimplify, deceptively, issues which he must — or should — know to be complex. And, beneath a cloak of rhetorical commitment to democracy, he chooses to benefit from any expedient of power which comes to hand.

NATURALLY, all intelligent politicians know that they cannot practise their trade without yielding, in some degree, to these corruptions — by way of the ordinary effects of a business carried on amid an unpredictable flux of events. The reason Benn attracts so much distrust among his fellow-practitioners is that they perceive him as using these devices of corruption, unrestrainedly, to pretend that this condition of political humanity does not apply to him.

For instance, the record of Labour's attempts, in office, to deal with the problem of making nationalisation — especially in such industries as shipbuilding — measure up to any human conception of socialism constitutes a vital part of Labour's contemporary, operational memory. Shipbuilding was Tony Benn's Cabinet responsibility during the mid-seventies, and here is the account he gives in *Arguments for Socialism,* produced in 1981 when worker-involvement in industrial planning ranks as an Opposition orthodoxy:

> . . . the shipbuilders in the yards did not want to find that they were handed over lock, stock and barrel, to a new nationalised shipbuilding industry which didn't take account of the spirit that they had developed in their own yards, which spirit had triggered off the decision to nationalise. Therefore, within the shipbuilding industry processes were set in motion under which the workers sat down in parallel with the new organising committee in order to work out how the industry was to be nationalised and what form of consultation and decision-making was to be created.

Here is Christopher Hird's account (*NS,* 9 March 1979) of what actually happened at the time:

> Eric Montgomery used to be an official of the AUEW in the North-West. When he lost the vote to be re-elected, he asked his old employers, the Vickers shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness, for his old job back: in the past it had always been understood that union officers would be re-employed. However, Vickers refused. Montgomery, who like many other trade-unionists, had fought for nationalisation . . . thought that the decision might be reversed after July 1977 when the shipbuilding industry formally passed into public ownership. But Montgomery did not get his job back. As he says: 'Over the negotiating tables one of the most violently opposed to nationalisation was Richardson, the chairman of the Vickers Shipbuilding Group . . . Now, he's on the nationalisation board, and I'm on the streets. That's nationalisation, 1977 style.'

The worlds described are far apart. *Arguments for Socialism* contains, also, Benn's account of the worker co-op experiments of the seventies, notably the one at Kirkby which he himself persuaded the workforce to set up. Disturbingly, although he claims credit for having brought in consultants to advise on Kirkby's prospects — 'a very modest contribution' — he makes no reference to his own decision to over-rule advice which demonstrated that the government's capitalisation of the co-op was quite inadequate.

In the event 1,000 workers, lacking both management and marketing experience, were given the job of running an under-capitalised business making night-storage heaters, radiator panels and fruit juice in a high-rent factory with 40 per cent empty space. Survival required a sales increase of *60 per cent.* Benn's account contains no analysis of this experiment's highly predictable, and highly damaging failure — nor any acknowledgement that his own actions might have contributed to it.

AS HIS OPPONENTS acknowledge, such deficiencies might be defensible within a charitable view of political motivation. But, they point out, Tony Benn and his supporters are pressing an exactly opposite view. Therefore, it becomes a legitimate question to ask what would be the 'Bennite' criticism of a Labour front-bencher who had become as deeply entangled as Tony Benn in de facto support for South Africa's foreign policy?

During the sixties, as Minister of Technology, Benn authorised the importation of uranium for British power-reactors. Originally, the metal was to come from Canada, but in 1968 Rio Tinto-Zinc arranged to supply it from the Rossing mine, which is in Namibia on territory illegally occupied by South Africa. Benn has since claimed that he wasn't told of the change, but Rio Tinto and the Atomic Energy Authority both insist that the Cabinet was informed.

In 1973, Labour pledged to end the Rossing contract on return to office. Publicly, Tony Benn promised to be more vigilant with the civil servants in dealing with the matter again. But in 1976, back at Technology, he recommenced the Rossing imports, having accepted the civil servants' untrue claim that no alternative was available.

At roughly the same time, the Minister made a decision with large implications for domestic liberty: over Liberal objections, Benn implemented the Atomic Energy (Special Constables) Act, which created a 650-strong force with access to 'whatever types of weapons are appropriate, including machine-guns.' Benn justified this by saying the force would be accountable to Parliament, but questioning of his Tory successor has revealed that the Chief Constable's report is a secret document.

To uneasy left-wingers, these sad items of history form a continuum with Tony Benn's cavalier attitude to present-day facts and realities. Many of them, for instance, were startled to hear him regaling last year's Conference with an account of how Labour's Manifesto had been butchered in secret cabal, to exclude provisions on capital controls, defence cuts, wealth taxation and public spending increases.

It in fact contained proposals, some strongly worded, on every point Benn said was missing. But what really set the teeth of the well-informed left on edge was the fact that Benn, had he cared to, could have made a true and telling speech on the exclusions from the same Manifesto — most notably, the details of how the Planning Agreements system was to operate.

And the famous proposal to reshape the British constitution by turning out a 'thousand peers' seems to have been equally flimsily constructed. Benn, it seems, was a member of a working party which addressed itself with some seriousness to the question of second chamber replacement or reform: there are genuinely difficult questions like the nature of the Supreme Court which would have to assume the Lords' judicial role. 'Oh God', said the Tribune MP John Garrett one day, by way of a joke, 'I sup-

Wait till you see the whites of their eyes

Keystone

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pose we'll just have to create a thousand peers eventually to get rid of the problem.' The next time he heard the remark, it was booming out over the Blackpool PA, and not sounding jokey at all.

THE KEY to Benn's campaign has been his early declaration, catching Parliament, Fleet Street, and — most important — the union bosses with their mental equipment in disorder. With some justice, Benn claims that a healthier union movement may one day emerge from the political shake-up it is getting. Meantime, however, the wondrous and finally arbitrary assortment of its decision-making machinery might just bring the Labour Party into terminal discredit.

The trouble is that there are five ways in which any union can decide the fate of its block vote: the decision of the party conference delegation; decision of the executive; decision of the special political committee (Labour Party members, generally); decision of the union conference; or a decision arrived at by 'consultation' with regions and branches.

There being no guidelines laid down by Labour's NEC, the left and the right merely try for the method which will get them the best chance of control.

For instance, the ASTMS block vote (which is larger than the number who pay the political levy, because the union simply buys extra votes) will go for Benn after a display of openness. Clive Jenkins' executive at first tried to stick to the Foot-Healey status quo, and then argued for 'wide consultation'. The left argued successfully that annual conference was the widest possible consultation, and the vote went to Benn.

So far, the battle for the Transport & General's 1.25 million votes has gone just the other way. Immediately on Benn's announcement, the Finance and General Purposes Committee voted 8-3 to say Benn should not have stood. However, last week's full executive passed a motion saying Benn had a right to stand. The left, concluding frankly that the executive was their best arena, then put through a motion saying that nominations for Deputy Leader should not be held closed until 12 August (apparently, a date selected quite arbitrarily). From this, it follows that there can be no discussion of the matter at the T&G's delegate conference beginning on 22 June: Benn's supporters make no bones about the fact that they are uncertain of their ability to control this larger body.

After 12 August, the executive will meet again and make a recommendation to the voting delegation, based on 'extensive consultation.' In the meantime John Silkin, who has numerous friends in the upper reaches of the T&G, will be doing his best to unravel this very neat fix.

Benn's own metaphor for the wheeling and dealing inside the unions is that his candidacy is acting as a yeast, encouraging a new kind of union democracy to ferment. It is difficult to pretend that such fermentation is other than overdue. But as any practitioner knows, a brew that is fermented too quickly and consumed too soon is likely to taste unpleasant, and have some very nasty side-effects.

Contributions from Rob Rohrer and Patrick Wintour

ITALY

Mr Gelli's potent briefcase

TANA DE ZULUETA unravels the Freemasonry scandal

THE INVESTIGATING magistrate from Rome, Domenico Sica, has the reputation of a man of action. Always about town in his bullet-proof Alfa Romeo, a radio receiver glued to his ear, he is flanked by his two personal bodyguards, windjackets bulging over semi-automatics strapped to their armpits. In Italy, where magistrates have wide investigative powers, Sica is the man investigating the scandal of the mysterious P2 freemasons lodge, with its 953 affiliates from the top ranks of Italian public life, including generals, ministers, newspaper editors and Secret Service chiefs. The uncovering of the lodge has already brought down the government, left the Secret Services without leadership and provoked one suicide. But now that Sica has shouldered his way into the inquiry there are signs that the worst Italian scandal since the war will end like all the others. A few (marginal) heads will roll and suspicions of murder, espionage and colossal corruption will be duly aired, until the public grows bored and the entire affair is left to sink quietly in the quagmire of the Italian law-courts.

The event which detonated the scandal passed almost unnoticed in Rome. On 18 March two Milan magistrates ordered a police search in the home and offices of a relatively unknown Tuscan industrialist, Licio Gelli, venerable master of the P2 lodge. They were not looking for the list of P2 members: freemasonry, though condemned by the Catholic church, is not a crime in Italy. The magistrates were on the tracks of another far more notorious P2 member, the Sicilian financier Michele Sindona, now serving a 25-year sentence in New York for causing the worst banking disaster in American history. Sindona, once the most powerful private banker in Italy, had wrought equal havoc there before escaping to the United States in 1974, his Italian empire in ruins. Wanted on charges of fraud in Italy, he appealed in 1975 to his friend and venerable master, Licio Gelli, who did not hesitate to sign an affidavit in New York testifying that Sindona was the victim of a Communist conspiracy in Italy.

Last year Sindona made his last desperate attempt to escape American justice. Simulating a terrorist kidnap, he made his way to Sicily on a false passport and set about blackmailing some of his old acquaintances in Italian politics and high finance. The Milan magistrates investigating the Italian end of the fake kidnap, as well as the murder of the liquidator of Sindona's banks, had some evidence that Sindona had appealed for help once again to his 'dear friend' Gelli.

IF SINDONA dabbled in blackmail, the magistrates discovered, he was an amateur compared to Gelli. Propped inconspicuously in a corner of Gelli's offices in Arezzo was a leather briefcase marked 'fragile', the contents of which have shaken the Italian establishment to its foundations. The first shock was the discovery that Gelli had access to the secret files of the magistrate investigating another P2 member, the banker Roberto Calvi, now being tried for illegally exporting currency. There was also some evidence that Gelli had been putting pressure on the head of the Italian judiciary, Ugo Zilletti, to intercede on Calvi's behalf, as well as on the original owner of the files. Zilletti, now under investigation for corruption, was forced to resign.

The magistrates were still faced with the list of 962 (953 excluding the deceased) P2 members, plus 32 files on assorted subjects ranging from the peccadilloes of the Prime Minister Arnaldo Forlani's son Luigi, to alleged payoffs on an oil contract with Saudi Arabia. The list was packed with the names of 262 generals and senior civil servants, none of whom, according to the Italian constitution, are allowed to join secret associations. There were also three ministers on the list, as well as the Secretary of the Social

AP

Venerable Master Licio Gelli

Democrat Party, Luigi Longo. The political and administrative implications were enormous and the magistrates decided to pass the whole lot on to 'the most competent authority', the Prime Minister.

Forlani, whose Cabinet chief was on the list, preferred simply to lock it away. The matter might have ended there had another copy not been sent to the Parliamentary Commission investigating the Sindona scandal, complete with receipts for membership fees, photocopies of cheques and Gelli's correspondence with his 'brothers.' Soon the names of P2 members were being systematically leaked to the press. Forlani still played for time, summoning three judiciary experts to decide whether the P2 lodge really

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is a secret association or just a harmless gentlemen's club. The experts must report back by mid-August — at the height of the Italian summer exodus, when parliament and all government offices are deserted, and most newspaper offices are half-staffed.

Faced with the news that 35 of his party members, including one minister, were on the list, the Socialist Party Secretary Bettino Craxi opted out of the government alliance. No-one can deny Craxi his political punch. Accompanied by the Socialist parliamentary party leader, Silvano Labriola, a listed P2 member, Craxi led his party's delegation to the presidential palace last month and coolly demanded a government of 'national renewal' to be headed, his collaborators let it be understood, by Craxi himself.

Meanwhile press reports that Gelli's files included copies of listed Secret Service documents have made the position of the 13 members of Italy's Secret Services on Gelli's list untenable. They have all, as well as the head of the government committee in charge of co-ordinating intelligence, been put on 'temporary leave.'

IT WAS the reports that Gelli had thoroughly infiltrated the Secret Services which brought the Rome magistrate Sica into the enquiry. The Milan judiciary was already trying to discover how Gelli had laid his hands on a top-secret government report on a notorious Saudi oil deal which fell through in 1979, following insistent rumours of enormous kickbacks to Italian mediators. Undaunted, Sica muscled in on the enquiry, staging a couple of raids in Rome which he described to the press as 'most interesting.' Milan had issued an arrest warrant for Gelli for 'illegally obtaining secret documents', but had kept the warrant secret in the hope that Gelli might return to Italy. Sica issued an international warrant for Gelli on charges of 'political espionage' and arrested the retired Secret Service officer Antonio Viezzer.

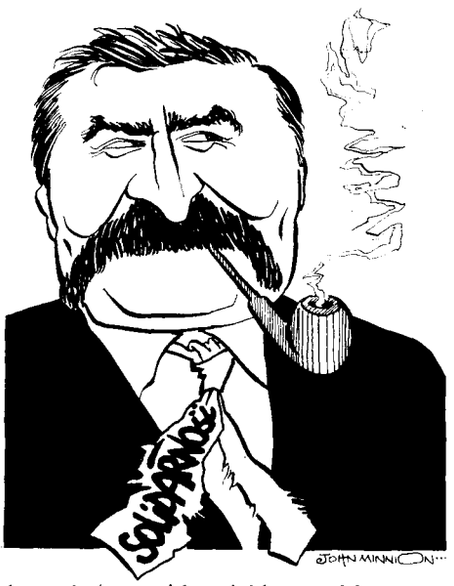
Sica has always worked closely with the Italian Secret Services. His reputation as an expert on terrorism is founded on his close collaboration with the carabinieri, the military police corps which supplies the Italian Secret Services with most of their recruits. And in fact the enquiry, though preceded by much fanfare, has not touched the existing ranks of Italian counter-espionage. Interpol have sent back his warrant for Gelli's arrest with a polite note explaining that 'political espionage' is not a crime covered by international police agreements. And as for the charges of forming a 'criminal association' issued against 17 heads of local branches of the P2 lodge round Italy, they are most unlikely to stand up in court, for all Sica's description of the P2 as 'Mafia-like'. The Italian judiciary have always found it notoriously difficult to stand up similar charges against genuine members of the Mafia.

Meanwhile the Milan magistrates who initiated the P2 enquiry are seriously worried that it will end up collecting dust on Roman shelves — or, worse, be so crudely patched together that a gathering of good lawyers will take only a matter of days to demolish the charges. Significantly, three enquiries on attempted coups in the 1970s which have already disappeared in Rome concerned listed members of Gelli's P2 lodge.

POLAND

Cliffhanger democracy

Poland's escalating crisis is generally viewed as a three-dimensional conflict between unions, government and external power. But more complex battles are being waged. JAN TOPOROWSKI, just returned from an extended visit, describes the divisions within Solidarity and examines the politics of new groups forming on the right.



WHEN SOLIDARITY abandoned its earlier threat to stage a strike on 30 March, almost the whole population greeted the decision with intense relief. At the subsequent stormy meeting of the National Coordinating Committee of Solidarity, on 31 March and 1 April, two of the most prominent members of the group, Andrzej Gwiazda and Anna Walentynowicz, offered their resignations. Jan Rulewski, the leader of Bydgoszcz Solidarity, who had been beaten up in the fracas on the 19 March, went as far as to accuse the negotiators of betrayal. Two distinct groupings have since emerged within the union.

The 'political' group lays great stress on the vanguard nature of Solidarity. Its members regret the passing of the days when Solidarity was an organisation of and for activists determined to expose, challenge and vanquish the social and political scandals of Polish society. They contrast this with the compromises, banality and ossification that are accompanying Solidarity's integration into Polish life.

Lech Walesa, a chief target of their criticism, is nevertheless confident of the support of the vast masses of Solidarity's members, and of his position as (effectively) the most powerful man in Poland. In the weeks that I have spent in Poland recently nearly all members of Solidarity expressed their allegiance and approved his efforts to avoid open hostilities with the government (in return, of course, for suitable concessions). Walesa maintains that Solidarity must consolidate its position in Polish society, normalise its relationship with it, and become the genuinely democratic trade union of its ten million members, responding to their everyday needs, rather than a league of activists concentrating on explosive national issues.

This view is echoed by some members of Solidarity who, while clearly not hardliners of the ruling Communist party, use the word 'extremists' to describe even the liberal intellectuals of the social-democratic KOR (the Workers Defence Committee, the most prominent of Polish dissident groups). They are reluctant to stake the future of Solidarity on the outcome of a struggle to change the nature of the political system in Poland and her relations with neighbours. Moreover, there is a widespread tiredness with cliff-hanging as a way of life. As the economic situation deteriorates, there is a growing desire for a serious attempt at reconstruction rather than confrontation.

I DISCUSSED some of the organisational problems of Solidarity with Jerzy Kropiwnicki, an articulate economist who is the press spokesman of the Lodz Solidarity. Lodz is a textile town and in its major industry, the bulk of unskilled and low paid jobs are held by women, while men hold the majority of better paid, more skilled jobs. I wanted to know about the role of women in Solidarity. The report of an International Metalworkers Federation Delegation to Poland last December had noted the cavalier (in every sense of the word) treatment of women trade unionists by their brothers in Solidarity. Mr Kropiwnicki conceded that there were problems and that women were seriously under-represented in the middle and upper levels of Solidarity. He hoped that the 'normalization' of the union's structures and activity would provide an opportunity to start resolving these issues.

Dr Agnieszka Salska, Secretary of the Lodz University Solidarity, who was with us at the time, expressed her conviction that, over the March strike plan at least, the views of the Lodz Solidarity leadership did not reflect the attitudes of the majority of its members. She was referring to the unskilled women textile workers, who under no circumstances wished to go into an indefinite general strike over what was so patently a provocation in Bydgoszcz. They had been prepared to strike merely because they would not break ranks with their fellow trade unionists. She told me that women had wept over their silent machines during the four hour warning strike on Friday 27 March. Mr Kropiwnicki claimed that, on the contrary, some of the most militant attitudes had been struck in the factories employing most women.

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We also talked about the way Solidarity meetings were organised. A passing reference to their chaotic nature had already been made in the IMF delegation's report. Both Mr Kropiwnicki and Dr Salska agreed that the experience was most frustrating: agendas were rarely drawn up, and when they were, they were not often followed. There were only rudimentary standing orders governing the conduct of meetings, and these were frequently hi-jacked by over-enthusiastic participants. They attributed this partly to the histrionic nature of Poland's political culture, but above all to the lack of any tradition of genuinely self-governing association under pre-war and post-war governments.

THE TREND OF OPINION in Solidarity was well illustrated by the case of Edmund Baluka. An exiled leader of the Szczecin shipyard workers in 1970, he appeared in the shipyard on 21 April. Admitting to having entered the country illegally, he appealed to his former work-mates to protect him from possible prosecution over his entry and his activities abroad. Government commentators were not slow to point out that Solidarity, having insisted on the rule in Bydgoszcz to the point of a general strike, would naturally wish to cooperate with the Szczecin procurator in investigating any possible breach of the law that may have been committed by Baluka. The procurator announced that if Baluka cooperated with the investigation, he would not be held under arrest until the investigation of possible breaches was completed.

Despite his initially enthusiastic welcome from the activists of the shipyard's Solidarity organisation, it rapidly became clear that the majority of the members there had no stomach for yet another confrontation, especially over such a clearly 'political' matter. Baluka at first held out for absolute immunity. This was then reduced to a demand to have the procurator's guarantees in writing. When this was refused, he gave way. On the 29 April he reported to the procurator's office accompanied by a lawyer and a representative of Solidarity.

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If the politics of Poland's working class have matured in the past 35 years (and especially in the last ten months) those of the Polish intelligentsia seem to have remained in their pre-war mould. Their most extreme exponent is the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN), an organisation which draws its inspiration from the Salazarist pre-war National Democracy. Its leader Lech Moczulski and five of its committee members are currently awaiting trial on charges of anti-state activity, a trial which the government has postponed in the hope of holding it in more settled times. A more moderate organisation, in the 'Christian Democrat' style, is the Committee for the Defence of Human and Civic Rights. To its left is KOR, the best known group.

So far two alternative political pressure groups have legalised themselves by registering with the Polish courts. The Polish Academic Union (PZA) is a Catholic organisation which has registered as a Union of University Teachers. On its notice-board at Poland's premier social sciences university, the Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw, it publicises the thoughts of Roman Dnowski, the pre-war guru of the National Democracy. Among announcements of meetings and masses, I found an article by a member of the PZA appealing for resistance to the 'judaization' of Poland's 'national culture'. The union is also campaigning for the abolition of women's right to abortion. A motion passed by the Warsaw Polytechnic branch of the Union demanded not only the criminalisation of abortion, but also the encouragement of large families and the restriction of employment solely to male heads of households.

The most sinister of the new organisations is, however, the Grunwald Patriotic Union (ZPG) which registered on 28 April. The ZPG claims to have 100,000 members and has its headquarters in the Warsaw Steel works. Its most prominent members are Bohdan Poreba and Ryszard Filipski, known hitherto for the rather wooden celluloid celebrations of Poland's former glories. The ZPG is euphemistically called in Poland's ruling party circles 'left nationalist'. Its combination of virulent nationalism with a rather militaristic ideal of socialism recalls unpleasantly Nazi attitudes in pre-war Germany. This is particularly vivid in the anti-semitic pronouncements of its members. Many Poles remark on the contrast between the ease with which the ZPG registered, and the months of struggle and delay which the Individual Farmers Solidarity has experienced.

When I expressed my distaste at this anti-semitic revival, I was informed by a member of the ruling party that with the number of Jews in Poland now reduced to a few thousand, there was of course no longer any 'Jewish problem'. Anti-semitism had merely become the expression of a desire to settle scores for the abuses of the early 1950's. At that time, people of right-wing beliefs and hence, in the Polish tradition, of an anti-semitic pre-disposition suffered, among others, for their beliefs at the hands of the Polish Communists, a large number of whom, it was said, were Jews. But this explanation is more of a rationalization than a rationale.

RACISM

City on fire

AMRIT WILSON reports from Coventry, where racist violence is now a fact of life.

ON SATURDAY 18 May, 20-year-old Satnam Singh Gill was beaten, kicked and stabbed to death by a gang of skinheads in broad daylight in Coventry's city centre. Not until two days later did the police admit there might have been a racist motive to the murder — and that came only after a 100-strong delegation went to the police station to protest. The day before Gill's murder another Asian was stabbed in the eye. Two weeks earlier, 17-year-old Susan Cheema had been stabbed 14 times while serving in her father's shop. Then, too, the police denied there was a racist motive.

In the last month alone there have been more than 30 attacks on black people in Coventry and four firebomb attacks on clubs and temples. William Wilson, Labour MP for Coventry South-East, and other figures of authority have asked people to cool down and live a 'normal' life. For some, that seems scarcely possible.

. Khurshid Begum, a woman of 50, was stabbed by skinheads while out shopping 150 yards from her home. Police interviewed her in hospital. The incident was reported as an attempted robbery and nothing more was heard. Last Friday, Rambir Singh, a boy of 14, was sitting outside his house when he was viciously kicked by a group of skinheads. His mouth was torn and his teeth broken. He and his father went to the police station and gave the name of one of the assailants. Three days later the police had yet to take action.

This makes an interesting contrast with the experience of Mohammed Aslam Khan. Having returned home from visiting a friend at 1.00 am, he was woken at 5.30 in the morning by a banging on the window of his first-floor bedroom. 'When I looked out I saw the house was surrounded by police', he told me. 'Seven of them pushed their way in.' Mr Khan claims that he was asked why he had got into a fight: 'Tell the truth, or we'll arrest you.' His house was searched, although no search warrant was shown. Without being allowed to dress properly, he was taken to Little Park Police Station and locked in a cell. There, he was told he could not phone a solicitor; nor was he charged with any offence. Finally, at 3.15pm, he was released without any explanation. Such methods, the police told me, were 'routine'. They were investigating an incident which had occurred the previous evening, when a white man had been hit on the head with a mallet.

This week, two more Asians are lying critically ill in hospital. Palwinder Singh was stabbed as he left the Hare and Hounds pub in the Stoke area on Thursday night. He and a friend were set upon by a group of skinheads. He was stabbed in the face, chest and back. His liver was punctured. This was reported on the local radio as 'a fight outside

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a pub'. Also critically ill is Amarnath Dharry, an Asian general practitioner, who was stabbed in the heart at 11.00 pm on Sunday night, on his way home from a fish and chip shop in the Earlsdon area.

Chief Superintendent Dennis Cubby of the Coventry police force told me that there was nothing to worry about: 'These things happen all the time in a mixed society. It's really only small groups of Asians and skinheads fighting each other.'

COVENTRY, ONCE A MODEL of industrial prosperity, now has an air of decay. Alfred Herbert, the machine tools company, has gone under. Massey Ferguson is said to be near bankruptcy. GEC is shedding workers and the aerospace industry has gone. Unemployment, already at 14 per cent, is rising. Many Labour politicians see this as the real cause of the violence. However, the danger of this view is that it can serve as an excuse for not confronting the problem of racism.

A more direct cause of the trouble may be that for some months now Coventry has become the focus of fascist activity. The British Movement and John Tyndall's New British Movement are both recruiting among the skinheads of the city. British Movement literature is said to be circulating in three schools. In a girls' comprehensive school in the Tile Hill area, a leaflet claiming to be from the 'International Council of Friends' has been found. It describes the impending billeting of a Pakistani family on a white household, and is rich in racist obscenities. The graffiti of the British Movement, the National Front and the Anti-Paki League (a Coventry speciality) are everywhere in the city.

School students told me that recruitment is usually carried out through personal contacts. Sometimes it starts merely as a fashion (white bootlaces for the British Movement, red for the National Front) and leads to children being caught up in fascist activity and ideology. They are told, among other things, to report 'red' schoolteachers. Head teachers, with a few exceptions, have retained an 'impartial' stance on the issue of racism, and seem unconvinced of the gravity of the situation. For children, particularly young ones, the areas just outside the schools are the most dangerous of all.

INCREASINGLY, school students are organising for their own protection. However, in Coventry as elsewhere in Britain, efforts of blacks to defend themselves, or simply to protest against racism, tend to be seen by police as a threat to law and order. According to Chief Superintendent Cubby, the trouble was really stirred up in Coventry after a demonstration against racialism; he is now concerned about 'vigilante groups', who he thinks will 'attack innocent people'. A demonstration was organised on 23 May by the Coventry Committee Against Racism, an umbrella organisation representing the temples, Gurwaras, and many other groups. They told me that police horses were used to split the demonstration into two. One woman was said to have been trampled on, and children to have been injured. The march was refused permission to go through the shopping precinct where Gill was murdered and the 8,000-strong demonstration had to end in a small square near Coventry cathedral. Racist counter-demonstrators were allowed to approach the march, shouting obscene taunts. When 74 people were arrested, most were anti-racists.

In spite of the growing anger of the black community there have been very few attacks on white people. What Cubby refers to as 'vigilante groups' are self-defence patrols organised by the Committee for Anti-Racist Defence Squads (CARDS). Members of the group explained to me that self-defence had become necessary 'because of the black community's desperate need for protection, which the police don't seem to be interested in or are unable to provide.' (It is true that police patrols have been stepped up in some areas, but I was told that the main effect has been to increase the number of black people being stopped and searched.) CARDS are also providing protection for families who have become the targets of regular attacks.

In the shopping precinct in the city centre, where skinheads used regularly to attack black people, CARDS have organised meetings 'to show that no-go areas for black people will not be tolerated in Coventry'. At one of their rallies on 9 May, the Coventry police brought in 53 officers from the Special Patrol Group. Young people attending the meeting were questioned, stopped from walking in groups and told to go home if they didn't want trouble. On the same day a group of young Asians attacked three skinheads (whom they claim to have seen committing racist attacks earlier on). One of them, Mohammed Yussuf, was arrested the same day. Four days later Coventry magistrates fined him £250 for 'malicious wounding'. Rarely are racist attackers brought to justice with such efficiency.

As the violence escalates, the Asian community say they are determined to drive the racist gangs off the city streets. □

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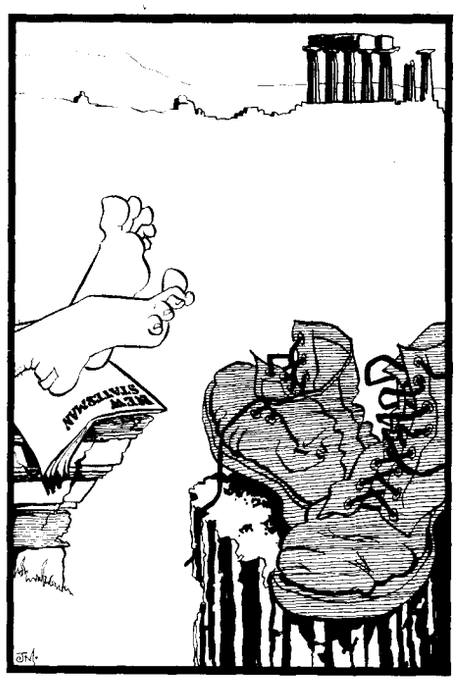

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Tridents into ploughshares

What hope for disarmament while large sections of the workforce depend for their livelihood on the construction of weapons? BILL NIVEN, National Organiser at AUEW-TASS, examines proposals for converting the arms industry into peaceful production.

AS THE SLOGAN 'Jobs not bombs' resounds through the protests at mass unemployment, it has a hollow ring in the ears of many armaments workers; for here, bombs *are* jobs. The public defence debate has concerned the political and strategic use of weapons, with the labour movement generally agreeing to support a disarmament policy of some sort. But that debate has obscured a different division, within the labour movement itself, which is this: while the reduction of mass unemployment has been declared a top priority, can we afford to throw our limited resources into trying to cut back the armaments industry? I believe we must face this contradiction, and can only do so by looking at detailed proposals.

As an indication of the size of the problem, AUEW-TASS recruits research and design workers from all industries, and a quarter of our members (and a proportionate amount of the nation's high technology resources) are engaged in armaments production. In addition, a third of all civil servants are employed by the Ministry of Defence (267,300 people, to be cut by 48,000 over five years). Three-quarters of the whole 'industrial' civil service is employed by the Ministry of Defence. Defence spending consumes 5.2 per cent of Britain's GNP — after the US, the highest proportion in the western world.

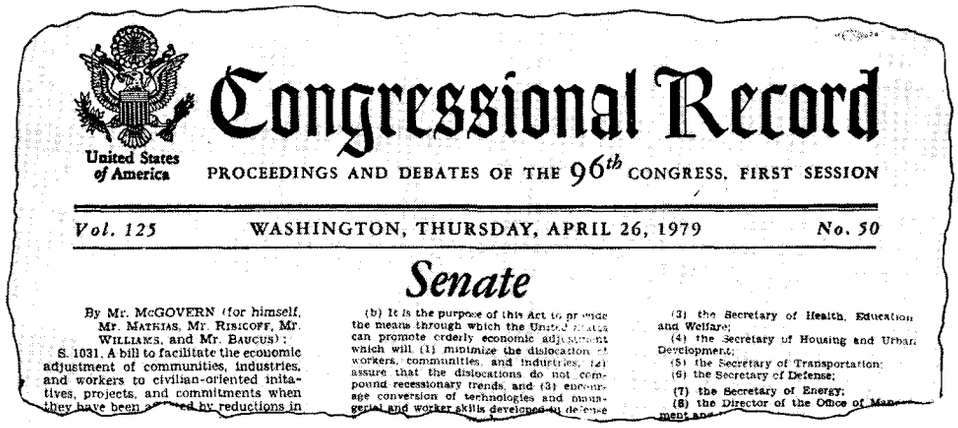
When John Nott announced cuts in this spending, in the 1981 Defence Estimates, the only publicised opposition came from the Tory backbenches. But overnight, 600 jobs were lost at the Hatfield and Lostock British Aerospace plants, where the Skyflash 11 and Sea Eagle missiles are made. Shop stewards went to lobby Parliament to oppose the cuts in these programmes.

The position of the Labour Party, declared in the Manifesto, is that:

> A Labour government will plan to ensure that savings in military expenditure do not lead to unemployment for those working in the defence industries. We shall give material support and encouragement to plans for industrial conversion so that the valuable resources of the defence industries can be used for the production of socially needed goods.

People in the labour movement are aware of the contradiction between policy and the defence of jobs, but that is because we've seen the unemployment and not the plans for industrial conversion. As the chairman of the Vickers combined shop stewards committee said on television recently:

> While we would always welcome alternative employment our main concern is work. While some of us have looked at the possibilities of alternatives we don't see anything else at present that could secure full employment. We would welcome five Tridents on our slipways.



United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 96th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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Senate

By Mr. McGOVERN (for himself, Mr. MATHIAS, Mr. RISICOFF, Mr. WILLIAMS, and Mr. BAUCUS):

S. 1031. A bill to facilitate the economic adjustment of communities, industries, and workers to civilian-oriented initatives, projects, and commitments when they have been [illegible] by reductions in

(b) It is the purpose of this Act to provide the means through which the United States can promote orderly economic adjustment which will (1) minimize the dislocation of workers, communities, and industries, (2) assure that the dislocations do not compound recessionary trends, and (3) encourage conversion of technologies and managerial and worker skills developed in defense

(3) the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare;
(4) the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development;
(5) the Secretary of Transportation;
(6) the Secretary of Defense;
(7) the Secretary of Energy;
(8) the Director of the Office of Man-

SOME PROGRESS in Britain on alternative production has been made, most notably at Lucas Aerospace. Preliminary sketches of alternative products have been carried out at Vickers and at British Aerospace Warton Division (where stewards have put in a claim that 1 per cent of the plant's annual profits should be set aside to finance experiments in alternative production), but these are rare 'victories', not plans made as a matter of course.

The problems facing even the most enthusiastic shop stewards are enormous. For most trade unionists, the vision of alternative products can be lost behind the daily mountain of administration and negotiations on 'bread and butter' issues. The more long-term, indefinite and complex an issue, the more likely it is to be relegated to the convener's pending tray. To get it into the 'action now' tray needs pressure from the members, but it is easy to forget, if you hear only the support for a policy at national conference level, how many shop floor members may feel their officers should stick to wages and conditions. It is not as though they are often confronted with weapons of destruction, for the division of labour is such that most people only ever work on a few components of a tank or missile.

One response in the US, which has won the support of at least one major union at national level, has been to promote a 'Defence Economic Adjustment' Bill, which has fostered public discussion and local planning groups on defence conversion. Professor Seymour Mellman, Co-chairman of the American peace organisation Sane and author of *The Permanent War Economy*, says not only that 'economic conversion planning' is one of Sane's two principal objectives (the other being to gain popular support for the reversal of the arms race) but also that the principles involved must be applied throughout an economy suffering from wholesale industrial incompetence, where productive systems are geared towards manufacturing things that aren't wanted.

The first Bill proposing defence conversion was put to Congress in 1963. Despite the fact that the hearings on the Bill were seen as unimportant, no public evidence was admitted and Cyrus Vance, then Deputy Secretary of Defence, put the White House position. Curious in retrospect about this heavy hand, Seymour Mellman burrowed in the *Pentagon Papers* and found that the hearings coincided with the secret formulaion of plans for a wartime economy.

The principal sponsor of the Bill has been George McGovern, along with Senator Charles Mathias (it is sometimes known as the McGovern-Mathias Bill), and it has been presented to Congress, in developing forms, several times since 1963. It has been filed again this session by New York Congressman Ted Weiss. The International Machinists Union, headed by William Winpisinger, the other Co-chairman of Sane, has actively supported the Bill. A sixth of their members work in the arms industry, and two other defence unions — the autoworkers and electrical workers — also support it.

At a labour meeting in New York last April, called to discuss a range of issues affecting working people, the question of defence conversion flowed through many of the sessions and met with no hostility from the aerospace workers present. Economic conversion is the only way of reconciling fear of job loss with opposition to the arms race, and is thus 'the key part of an exit from the arms race', believes Professor Mellman.

The McGovern-Mathias Bill would establish a Defence Economic Adjustment Council whose aim would be to encourage national and local government departments to prepare specific plans for any non-military public projects for which they could see a need. All plans would then be published by the Council so that armaments companies could see what potential government markets existed for alternative products. The council would also have to produce a 'Conversion Handbook', laying down rudimen-

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tary guidelines on conversion. The Council would be made up of Cabinet members, civilian industry representatives and trade union representatives, in equal numbers. It would operate under the Executive Office of the President, ensuring its authority.

IN BRITAIN there are various possible structures for overseeing and promoting defence conversion. They should fulfil the following criteria, though my actual proposals are all tentative:

- government involvement at a high level, ensuring a supply of finance and sufficient authority to guarantee serious planning;
- a tripartite structure (industry, unions, State);
- direct involvement of shop stewards or elected shop floor, union representatives.

The closest structure in Britain to the DEAC is the National Economic Development Council under whose aegis the tripartite Sector Working Parties (SWPs) function. SWPs exist to promote the development of most industrial sectors in Britain. An Industrial Conversion Working Party could be set up with similar terms of reference to a SWP, but able to draw on the knowledge of any SWP that covered armaments production. It could also draw on other State agencies, such as the Manpower Services Commission.

Another possibility is that a Labour government would re-establish an effective National Enterprise Board. This could take on the promotion of industrial conversion at national planning level with the money to finance specific research projects.

A body with higher status might be preferable, in which case the answer might be a Ministry of Disarmament and/or an autonomous Industrial Conversion Commission. This could, for example, set up Regional Advisory Committees, as armaments production is geographically concentrated. Seven regional committees would cover 99 per cent of all defence contracts over £5 million.

The advantage of regional committees is that they could promote plant-by-plant conversion committees, allowing for communication between various companies, local councils and local needs. This principle is embodied in the McGovern-Mathias Bill, which provides that every sizeable military facility set up an 'alternative use' committee, involving management, unions and local people. These would have to be set up as a *condition of eligibility* for a defence contract, a stipulation which provides a very valuable spur to manufacturers to look seriously at conversion.

The Labour Manifesto promises 'material support' for conversion, and on this the McGovern-Mathias Bill proposes a workers' Economic Adjustment Reserve Trust Fund, financed by 1.25 per cent of the gross revenue of every defence contract. In Britain, the purpose of the proposed American fund is provided for by union negotiations on redundancy payments. Because trade unions in Britain have succeeded in getting severance payments similar to those proposed in the McGovern-Mathias Bill, a fund is needed here less for post-conversion expenses than to finance the research and planning of conversion and the unprofitable period of changeover from one product to another.

There is reason for optimism in that savings in the Defence budget are bound to find their way into other sectors of the economy stimulating growth *at a faster rate,* pound for pound, than it does in the arms industry. As Herman Rebhan, General Secretary of the International Metalworkers' Federation, said to the UN:

> There has been a steady increase in military spending in the United States in the past five years. In 1975 there were 97,300 members of the machinists' union employed on military contracts. By 1978 there were 85,000, a drop of 12,300. It is because military production operates at the very fringe of technological development. Military industries are both capital intensive and technologically highly advanced. Both aspects mean a decline in labour. Even with a massive new twist in the arms race the military industry is the worst place in which to invest with a view to creating jobs.

If we don't believe that, what is the alternative?

MULTINATIONALS

RTZ burrows into Panama

CATHERINE CAULFIELD reveals fate of Guaymi Indians

IN AN AGREEMENT with Rio Tinto Zinc, the giant mining corporation, the Panama government has signed away the tribal homelands, health and livelihood of 70,000 Guaymi Indians, at the same time endangering its own national sovereignty. The Guaymi lands, in Panama, contain the Cerro Colorado, a 'red mountain' of over 2000 million tons of copper, one of the richest deposits in the world. In partnership with CODEMIN, the state mining corporation, RTZ plans to start digging out the copper in 1987, leaving behind a huge hole from the excavated copper, and mounds of waste which will drift down into the rivers and streams.

While the Guaymi will see acres of their land devastated by the main mining operation, another 100,000 acres will be flooded by a hydro-electric scheme to be built by RTZ. There will also be a smelter producing over 26 million tons of acid waste and sulphur gas a year, and subsidiary calcium mines to feed the smelter.

The first the Guaymi knew of any of this was when bulldozers started ploughing through their orchards, crops, fences and wells to build a new road. Although the constitution guarantees that native communities would be given collective title to their traditional lands, the government is now claiming that they need neither consult with, nor compensate, the Guaymi for their loss of land. Several Guaymi subsequently wrote to President Aristede Royo:

> We are very sad that you say our lands do not belong to us but to the Government . . . You know the laws and know that our rights as Indians historically precede those of the modern state over which you preside. We are sadder still to hear that the lands of the large landowners are legally recognised as belonging to them because they have a legal title that dates from just 15 years ago. Many times they obtained their land by cheating us.

In a pattern familiar in South America, the lands protected by 'legal' property titles are the most fertile, commandeered from the outside for luxury export crops. The Guaymi farm much poorer land or work as labourers on large plantations and cattle ranches, either way subsisting in desperate poverty. Contact with white society has infected 20 per cent of them with chronic tuberculosis, while 60 per cent of the children are severely malnourished and 60 per cent have permanent intestinal parasites. Campaigns to get the government to recognise their land and 'organic' (traditional Indian) law are hampered by the fact that very few write, or even speak, Spanish.

There will be almost no compensatory gains for the Guaymi, only about 200 of whom expect to get jobs from RTZ's operations. Instead, thousands of labourers will be brought in and housed in temporary camps, creating an ephemeral boom economy based on providing the labourers with drink and sex. In fact, the Panamanian Bishops Conference has decided to support the Guaymi resistance to the project, which is being led by a congress of elected Guaymi representatives. They are demanding not abandonment of the project, but recognition of their land rights, and a major share in planning and benefiting from the mine.

Exactly what the long-term benefits might be is very dubious, as the Cerro Colorado project is likely to be an 'enclave' economy — one that does not stimulate the creation of other self-sustaining industries. Panama will have to find over half the $2 billion costs, as well as financing the supporting services. For instance, the extra electricity it must provide equals current national electricity consumption. Although the government has a 51 per cent interest in the project, its returns will be slower than RTZ's, day to day control is in the hands of RTZ, and, most astonishing of all, the contract will take precedence over national law, so that the operation may be exempt from environmental, labour and criminal laws if they inhibit RTZ's activities. It will not be easy for Panamanians to argue over technological priorities because RTZ has obtained agreement that all technical documents will be printed in English only.

In effect, the Panamanian government has mortgaged the country's future for a long time to come to one of the world's most volatile commodity markets, and one of the world's largest multi-national companies.

Guaymi conference to discuss fight back, March 1981

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Diary

MARY HOLLAND

Dublin

■ The bad thing about Irish elections is that there is no way one can hope for a government with policies even as lukewarmly socialist as those of the British Labour Party. The good thing is that one is spared Thatcherite rhetoric, and the threat of the monetarist lash. Even in this campaign, when inflation is running at 20 per cent and the country is rapidly running out of credit, there is very little talk about the need to regenerate our sense of national purpose by putting the country's books in order.

The choice for the majority of voters is between two determinedly capitalist parties both committed to a high degree of state intervention in the economy, with a slightly socialist Labour Party bringing up the rear. When it comes to government the alternatives are Fianna Fail which, with three brief periods out of office, has held office ever since 1932 (when Eamon De Valera led his party of erstwhile IRA men into parliament with instructions to lodge their guns at the door) and a coalition of Fine Gael and Labour. Fianna Fail is populist (Soldiers of Destiny), Republican in its rhetoric and gathers its support from the urban working class, small farmers and big business. It is *nouveau riche* and not ashamed of it. Fine Gael (Family of the Gael) is several social cuts above this, or likes to think it is. Its traditional support comes from the professional middle classes, big farmers and academics. It has two wings. One, represented by Garret Fitzgerald, would fit fairly easily into the Social Democrats, with its pleasant liberal instincts (as long as the going doesn't get too rough) and its economic pragmatism. The other wing is much more reactionary, wedded to a traditional stance of being tough on law and order.

Where does that leave the Irish Labour Party founded by the revolutionary James Connelly? Its only hope of power is to go into coalition with the conservatives of Fine Gael, something which neither side relishes very much.

■ There's one thing on which all the party leaders are agreed firmly, and that's abortion. They're not having it. Recently I wrote in the *New Statesman* about the growing number of Irish women who go to Britain for abortions every year, and the tentative appeals by Irish feminists for a more humane attitude. Some hope.

Just before the election was called a group called the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign announced its existence and its aims. Its list of founding patrons, headed by Professor Eamon De Valera, an eminent gynaecologist and son of the late President, reads like a roll call of leading obstetrics dons from most Irish universites. Although abortion is already a crime in Ireland the new group is demanding that a referendum be held to change the Irish constitution to guarantee the right of life of the foetus from the moment of conception. They explain that the constitution 'guarantees protection for the right to life of the "citizen" but does not mention the unborn child'; it might therefore happen that 'interests favouring abortion, acting on the basis of a carefully selected case' could challenge the present law as unconstitutional — for example if a pregnant woman's life was thought to be in danger. Fine Gael was the first in the field promising to initiate such a referendum. Fianna Fail followed very quickly indeed and the Labour Party also indicated its agreement.

It's worth remarking that all three parties have made great play for the women's vote in this election. At a press conference to launch its special policy document on women, the Fine Gael spokesperson was asked whether there were any circumstances — pregnancy following rape or incest? — when abortion might be considered. No, never, never, never. Of course we'll go on having meetings about a woman's right to choose and the climate will change. Meanwhile thousands of women will continue to take the 'abortion special' trip to London and give thanks for this English solution to an Irish problem.

■ The North has loomed over this election in any number of ways: The H Block protests, the millions of pounds in malicious damage claims being lodged by English notables whose stately homes have been burned in their absence, and the northern candidates, also absent. The H Block Committee has put up nine Republican prisoners, including one woman, to run in the election. There are also a number of independents campaigning on the hunger strike issue. It seems unlikely that any of them will win a seat but, to judge by the average age of their campaign workers, they may attract a substantial number of votes from that not unimportant section of the community known as 'the youth'. At the very least they ensure that the North is kept to the forefront of the election. One of the surest ways of getting a cheer at any public meeting is to attack Mr Haughey for his 'special relationship' with Mrs Thatcher. Even Garret Fitzgerald, whose father was a member of the first Irish government which accepted partition, has chided Mr Haughey for his 'naivete' in trusting a British government.

■ The same problem has struck nearer home. Recently my six-year-old son arrived home from school in an acute moral dilemma. His peers in the playground had been discussing the hunger strikers and had decided that Mrs Thatcher must be hanged. A kindly child who cannot bear to hurt a fly, he thought it was wrong to hang anybody. I agree that yes, it was wrong to hang people. He was still worried. 'But she is the most absolutely horrible person in the whole world isn't she, mummy?' I will draw a discreet veil over my reply and merely remark that this was no hotbed of Republicanism, but a Protestant state school in a salubrious Dublin suburb. The children of both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are represented there. So, it would seem, are the views of the parents.

■ The most cheering news from Northern Ireland in a long time was the selection of Ms Kate Hoey as prospective candidate for Sam Silkin's seat in Dulwich. As a member of the Labour Party on Hackney Council Ms Hoey quite rightly objects to being branded with an exclusively 'Irish' tag. But she makes no bones of the fact that she is an Ulster Protestant who is also a Republican and a socialist. She is a former member of the Newtonabbey Labour Party, one of the few branches of the Northern Ireland Labour Party still in existence. For those who sometimes despair of Ulster politics and politicians it's worth remarking that her family and political roots are in County Antrim, the area which produced Rev. Ian Paisley. I look forward to seeing them shape up to each other.

Roger Woddis

The Hunting of the Zark*

They fought it with cannons, they fought it with flak;
They pursued it down dale and up ben;
They threatened its life with a hessian sack;
They cursed it with camera and pen.

They shuddered to think that the chase might fail,
And the Footman, incited at last,
Went hobbling along with a shovel and pail,
While others more agile ran past.

'There's the Footman advancing!' the Bullyboy said.
'He is adding his bite to his bark!
He is wagging his stick, he is shaking his head,
Thank God he is hunting the Zark!'

They gazed in delight, but the Silkworm exclaimed,
'His foot is beginning to drag!
Let me challenge the Zark while I'm feeling inflamed,
And the blighter will be in the bag!'

They exulted with glee, as they hurried to see
A cadaver all covered with gore;
But all they brought home was the froth and the foam
That remained on the hattersley shore.

They hunted till darkness came on, but they found
Not a button, or feather, or mark;
And they knew, from the rumble that grew underground,
They would have to kill more than the Zark.

*A zealous creature said to guard the Ark of the Conference.

This England

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☐ A new high-protein food produced by biotechnology is to go on trial in Britain within a year. By itself it is tasteless and colourless but can be made into artificial chicken, cheese or cake. — *Guardian* (A.G. Kenyon)

☐ Lord Soper, former President of the Methodist Conference, told a court yesterday that a Methodist minister's acts of gross indecency in a public lavatory might eventually 'enrich his ministry'. — *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

☐ As Ron Greenwood was saying on LBC radio yesterday morning: 'It is easier to play with this system against continentals like the Brazilians than it is an English side like Wales.' — *Observer* (Mike Sones)

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LETTERS

A severed head

Austin Mitchell's retelling of Albert Bore's 'defence of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan' (Letters 5 June) is based on the *Sunday Times* article of 24th May.

Cllr Bore was speaking in a debate on whether the newly elected Labour City Council should contribute to the appeal for the British Olympic team, especially in view of the selection of Birmingham athletes for that team. The Tories, of course, toed the Thatcher line all the way and talked of how this defended the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. All the Labour councillors who spoke opposed the Russian invasion. What Albert Bore did was to set the Tory hypocrisy in the context of their unswerving support of American military activity in Vietnam and elsewhere. At no time did he say that the Russians were right to invade Afghanistan, but the Tories naturally interpreted 'no worse than the Americans' as meaning 'obviously good.'

It is strange that two Labour MPs (since I take it that the Sage of Grimsby's knowledge of Birmingham is indirect) should be parroting the distortions of Tory councillors.

D. E. Spilsbury, 17 Highbury Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham 14

What the MP for Grimsby can claim to know about the affairs of Birmingham Ladywood is beyond us. As far as we know Mr Mitchell has never entered the contituency, yet he claims to be conversant not just with events at GMC level, but the internal workings of the wards as well. Given that he is presumably relying on hearsay, and partisan hearsay at that, it is not surprising that his 'facts' and interpretations are wildly innaccurate.

First, the 'facts'. No Ladywood ward meeting has been inquorate for over 18 months. Mr Sever's exclusion was not 'deliberately engineered', and the evidence produced for the conspiracy theory is laughable. There are no Militant supporters of the GMC from the Ladywood ward, and Malcolm Speake, the constituency secretary and member of the ward accused of supporting Militant is not, and has never been, a supporter of Miltant. Albert Bore does not and has never supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The report given to the GMC concerning Soho delegates, and not challenged, is as your reporter stated. There were no applications to Soho last December which had been outstanding for several months.

Second, Mr Mitchell's interpretation. There are two aspects which are particuarly unpleasant. First, he says that people can be Militant supporters even when not in favour, or actively opposed, to Militant. This is guilt by association and on this argument anyone not a card-carrying member of Solidarity can be accused of supporting Militant. Second, the allegation that Albert Bore supported the Soviets in Afghanistan has already been corrected in print, in *Tribune* (29th May).

Members of Ladywood ward are gravely concerned at the wildly inaccurate and damaging stories now being circulated about the affairs of the constituency. At our next branch meeting we will be considering what steps can be taken to ensure that the public receives a full and accurate picture of what has happened in the constituency over the last decade.

Bob Hoole, Chairman, Ladywood Ward & Ladywood CLP and Finola McGrath, Secretary, Ladywood Ward Labour Party, 22 Rodney Close, Birmingham 16

Fair treatment on the NHS

I was horrified to see myself misquoted in the article 'NHS may rule out blacks' (*NS* 29 May). The words were lifted from an article printed in the *Guardian*, itself an inaccurate summary of a long telephone conversation held some weeks previously. Colour has never been 'grounds for suspicion' at St Stephens Hospital.

So what is the current position at St Stephens Hospital? It is NHS policy to give emergency treatment to anyone, without question, free of charge. The decision whether patients should pay for non-urgent treatment is governed by complex and illogical regulations. These cover agreements with other governments; for example Australians pay, New Zealanders do not. The DHSS instruct us to ensure that only those patients eligible for NHS treatment actually get it. Very occasionally, we may ask for documentary evidence of eligibility. If there is any doubt about a patient's eligibility we contact the DHSS for advice. We always give the first available appointment before examining the patient's eligibility. We never refuse treatment.

The Government's proposed regulations are even more complicated, inconsistent and illogical. How will hospital staff, even if they understand the rules, explain them to patients who may not follow such ridiculous terms as 'not ordinarily resident'? Understandably, patients are often confused and worried when they come for treatment and even more so if they fear that hospital staff are 'part-time immigration officers.'

We are already reviewing our policies to make sure that they are simple, fair and non-racist. It would help us all if the Government would do the same.

Catherine Fagg, Deputy House Governor, St Stephens Hospital, Fulham Road, London SW10

Special neglect for the homeless

ATV's documentary 'For God's sake care' and *NS's* article 'For God's sake pay' (22 May) gave the public an excellent insight into what really happens to their donations to the Salvation Army and how that charity runs its hostels.

But it would be misleading to assume that the Salvation Army is the only charity for the homeless which needs to put its own house in order. In many parts of the country there are local charities which have similarly failed to provide accommodation fit for human beings to live in and mislead the public as well.

I remember visiting a shelter where men sleep on planks, not

beds, in a crypt which would fail thorough inspection from the authorities. Many men were barred from sleeping there for what I saw as minor reasons. During my visit, a young man who was being interviewed by the warden took an overdose in front of our eyes. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the staff telephoned not for an ambulance but for the police! That charity also appealed, in the name of God, for donations from the public.

Apart from the need for the Salvation Army to quickly reorganise its services and plans for the future to more genuinely meet the preferences of homeless single people, ATV's documentary pointed to the need for those of us with decent housing to make sure that the provision of housing for all is a major priority for the next Labour government.

Andrew Erlam, 14 Catherine Grove, London SE10

Sloppy lecturer

When Professor John Honey (Letters 29 May) writes of a 'consensus of educated usage' that gives *decimate* a meaning corrected by Peter Kellner, he should surely write 'consensus of *uneducated* usage.' If this consensus of his were educated, its contributors would have looked up the right meaning long before wrong use had reached the point where Collins or any other modern dictionary needed to record that too.

Decimate is a word with a precise numerical sense. The idea that in an era of higher education a consensus of ignorance remains an acceptable way of changing that is all the more astonishing for coming from an academic of a School of Education.

Harry Fieldhouse, 16 Lord's Court, St John's Wood Road, London NW8

Lynch mob or apartheid

Mr Cook (Letters 29 May) appears to belong to the group of people I referred to, rather wishfully, as able to draw considerable benefit from reading G.M. Fredrickson's masterful study. The historical facts brought out in Fredrickson's book cannot simply be wished away.

Mr Cook would clearly like to believe that things are and always have been as he would like them, stereotypically, to be. If racial tolerance was not far more pronounced in the 18th century Cape than in contemporaneous America, how does he explain the fact of as many as a quarter of all legal marriages in the former case involving miscegenation, as against virtually none at all in the latter case? Equally, while there can be no doubt that labour practices on white South African farms, both then and now, have included many shocking cases of brutality and inhumanity, there is, again, no doubt that the general emphasis of Fredrickson's thesis is quite correct.

I am sorry to be taken to task about Mr Weinberg's book, with its excellent and historic photographs. The fact is that the collection is seriously deficient in its recording of non-ANC/SACTU/CP movements and personalities. How can one assemble a collection culminating in the great explosion of Sharpeville without even mentioning that this terrible event resulted from the PAC's anti-pass campaign and that the ANC had, originally, nothing to do with it? The fact that Mr Weinberg has suffered much at the hands of the South African government is, in this context, simply a red herring. If Mr Weinberg wishes, in his text, to adhere to a monochrome, unilinear party line view of history, he must expect criticism from those more interested in historical accuracy than party lines.

In a way, though, all this is beating about the bush. What really upsets Mr Cook is that anyone can say or write things which, in his view, might bring aid or comfort to the enemy, that is, the South African government. He assumes that I *must* be involved in the same propaganda war as he is, so that if I record the facts of racial tolerance in the 18th century Cape it *must* be because I am trying to make some moralistic propaganda point about South African whites. The same *cui bono* view of historiography is taken by those who write history text books in, say, South African or Soviet schools, as also by those who ban books and newspapers in South Africa or the Soviet Union. The pitfalls of such a view of history seem obvious to me, but of course if Mr Cook prefers that way of looking at things, he has every right to do so. Where he is wrong is in his assumption that others, including myself, must — almost obligatorily, it seems — share his own morally didactic purpose. I don't.

R.W. Johnson, 1 Rose Lane, Oxford

Wrong town

Ms Cooke's review of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* (*NS* 5 June) made disappointingly little of a remarkable book.

Perhaps it is enough to point out that the novel is set in New Orleans and not St Louis as Ms Cooke maintains; the importance of this for the title alone indicates the world of regional humour which she seems to have missed.

It is rather like mistaking Wessex for Birmingham were one to review a comic *Jude the Obscure.*

Nicholas von Maltzahn, Lincoln College, Oxford

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Patricia Hollis shows how today's lobby system grew from the political manipulation of the Victorian press

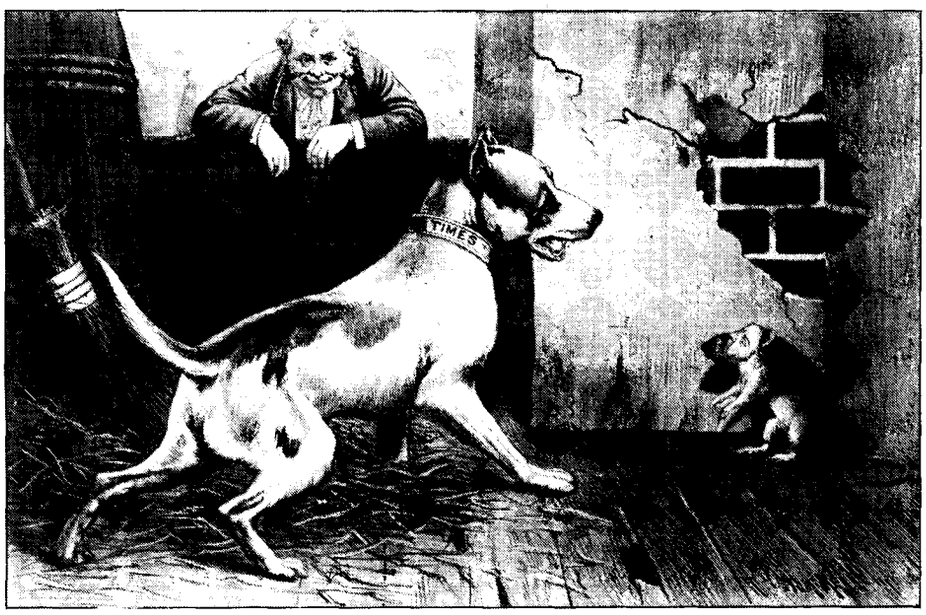
The editor's word is final

THE POLITICAL PRESS of this study was a press within a press addressing itself to a nation within the nation — very much the same state of affairs as we have today. Professor Koss has written a book — and a good book — about the transactions between a few London quality papers and slightly more London quality politicians. The papers, headed by *The Times*, were those devoted to high politics (parliamentary debates, public speeches, political obituaries) and devoured by the 'thoughtful men' who lived their lives in the shadows cast by the Palace of Westminster and the London clubs, regarding their constituencies and country houses as so many colonial outposts. It was a concept of the press and of the nation that excluded the entire provinces, most men, and all women. (As Harmsworth delicately put it, 'Women can't write and don't want to read.')

Professor Koss's massive book (some 250,000 words and a first volume at that) studies the power relations between high politics and the London quality press. His argument is straightforward: before the 1850s the newspaper stamp meant that the quality press was a government press (not true, incidentally); and from the 1890s it slowly succumbed to the new journalism associated with Harmsworth, brash, cheap, innovative, in which parliamentary politics lost their centrality. The intervening half century saw the heyday of an authoritative and influential political press, taking party lines but not party orders, promoting factions, making causes, breaking men. Palmerston was the first to appreciate this. Russell attributed his fall in 1857 to 'Palmerston being popular with the mob and the *Times*, and therefore I was thrown over'. As one of Russell's aides put it:

> We want better principles, a higher tone, greater constancy, better writing. What they (the press) chiefly aim at is above all getting authentic information, and forming good relations with official people ... How far they will submit to controul in return for this sort of information is of course a question ...

The politicians wanted loyal puffs of their policies, platforms and selves; the press wanted reliable tips, 'insider' political information denied to their rivals. Palmerston manipulated almost all of the London press in behind the Whig/Liberal party, to Gladstone's later benefit and Disraeli's dismay. But a press that was predominantly liberal when Disraeli took office in 1874 was predominantly tory when he left it in 1880. Helped by Churchill's unpopularity, Gladstone wooed some of the London papers back to him but lost them again over home rule. Only the *Daily News*, the *Chronicle*, and the *Manchester Guardian* remained stoutly liberal to the end of the century, though Parnell's death helped to revive liberal fortunes and press favours.



Mary Evans Picture Library

The dog that barked: *The Times* **corners Parnell over home rule.**

It was a symbiotic relationship. Much of the book documents the efforts of journalists and proprietors to become MPs, and politicians and party agents to become newspaper managers. They courted a paper; if that failed, they tried to buy it; if that failed, to establish one of their own. £100,000 appears to have been the cost of a new paper, anything from £5,000 to £50,000 the price of an existing one. And all the while sinking newspapers anxiously sought money from party funds to keep them afloat, in the national interest; and sinking prime ministers sought anxious interviews with the editor of the *Times*, who, Derby reported to Disraeli in 1867, 'listened most attentively to the whole of our programme, and pronounced oracularly, "I think it will do".' But Delane clearly hadn't, it wouldn't, and Gladstone bounced back to power.

This book is not a history of the press. For reasons which Professor Koss keeps to himself, it contains almost nothing about the commercial structure within which the political press functioned; nothing about the technical developments in printing and communications; nothing about sales, readership, advertisements; nothing about the rival products in the market, the popular papers, such as *Reynolds*, or the political press of the great provincial cities, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield. The *Leeds Mercury*, of national stature in the 1850s, is barely mentioned. Yet these papers were the very fibre of Gladstonian liberalism. Brighton in the 1870s, after all, with a population of 90,000, had half a dozen substantial newspapers published in the town and consumed several county papers as well, all of them dense with reports of parliament, the town council, the school board, the guardians; the verbatim speeches of local Members; public meetings on women's suffrage, Irish affairs, and Romanist hegemony within the Church. The coverage local papers gave to Chamberlain's Birmingham Education League encouraged Brighton liberals to follow suit. The political press and the political nation were fortunately rather larger than Professor Koss allows.

THIS BOOK is also not a history of press opinion on men and measures. The Crimean war, the 1867 Reform Act, the Bulgarian Atrocities, Home Rule, were perhaps four of the key events reshaping the alignments of parties and the press in the later nineteenth century. The author is well placed to offer us some case studies indicating the depth, range and adequacy of press coverage in the period, and the degree to which the press manufactured or merely mediated public opinion. We don't get it. Again, politicians depend on their column inches. The *Pall Mall* in 1885 noted that Chamberlain, Churchill, Gladstone and Salisbury were entitled to verbatim coverage of their speeches, Hartindon and Spencer were each worth a full column, others were usually half-a-column men. Disraeli back in 1873 could make a speech of three and a half hours, and the next morning the *Manchester Guardian* would carry two solid pages of it under the single headline, 'Mr Disraeli at the Free Trade Hall', with no subsequent paragraph breaks or subtitles. But nowhere in this book do we get any study of the treatment of politicians by the press, the odd remark about Russell and Churchill apart. Could the political press make causes and break men? Did it form, fabricate or follow public opinion? Professor Koss will not say. His territory is the intersection of parliamentary politics as reported and public opinion as conveyed, but I do not believe that that can be properly mapped by restricting one's vision to the minutely detailed interaction of leader writers and party leaders.

The book, therefore, has the virtues, vices and many of the assumptions of the press it studies. It is full and exact in its

The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain. Volume One: The 19th Century
by STEPHEN KOSS *Hamish Hamilton* £20

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scholarship, and makes no concessions to the reader, presuming both an intimate knowledge and the customary stamina of the period. It is also authoritative, polished, and often elegantly epigrammatic. And ultimately it is cynical. Politics becomes manipulation, not ideology; the press is about influence, and not news.

Reassuringly, Gladstone was catapulted back to office in 1880 over a phalanx of press hostility. By the 1890s politicians had come to appreciate that press opinion was not always public opinion; and the press, that club opinion was not necessarily national opinion. The Harmsworth developments, more foreign news, sport, fiction, fashion, features, at the expense of parliamentary news, suggest a more open and pluralist culture, though hardly a novel one. Back in 1823 W.M. Praed had written in the *Morning Chronicle*:

> And guilt hath wed legality
> And useful through the nation,
> Is prurience to publicity
> And sin to circulation.

Even so, in the media's recent coverage of the county council elections, there was more about the GLC, which has little power and less to do, than about the rest of the counties of England and Wales put together, despite their very real responsibility for services. The media still continue to perceive the provinces as an archipelago of offshore islands around mainland London. But then of course we don't have a national press, merely London papers nationally distributed. Professor Koss's thesis notwithstanding, the nineteenth century political press of London and of the provinces served its communities rather more adequately.

Among this week's contributors:

PATRICIA HOLLIS is senior lecturer in 19th century history at the University of East Anglia and has written half a dozen books on the labour and women's movements in the 19th century, including *Pauper Press* (1970). She is a city and county councillor.

GENERAL SIR ANTHONY FARRAR-HOCKLEY serves in the army currently commanding the NATO forces in Northern Europe.

HILARY WAINWRIGHT is co-author of *The Lucas Plan: A New Trade Unionism in the Making*, to be published by Allison & Busby this autumn.

Anthony Farrar-Hockley

The commander

Monty: The Making of a General 1887-1942
by NIGEL HAMILTON *Hamish Hamilton* £12

Keystone

It is a fair contention that biography is one of the most difficult tasks for a writer, and particularly the biography of a contemporary figure whose life has made some impression upon millions of people and impacted upon numbers in a close relationship. There is the requirement to set out the historical circumstances of the subject's life and work, to discover the objectives of that work as progressively conceived, the opportunities and the accomplishments. A narrow recital of deeds will scarcely be enough, however; the distractions of the flesh and the spirit must be considered if only to demonstrate the strength of purpose to persist successfully or otherwise. At once, the biographer has another difficulty to overcome: to what extent, if at all, is the psychology of the subject to be a part of the life story? If so, by what signs and by what criteria is the influence of seeing 'something nasty in the woodshed' in childhood to be judged? Not least, there are the difficulties arising from the author personally knowing or not knowing the personality in focus.

Nigel Hamilton has had to surmount these and other problems in taking on the official 'life' of Field-Marshal Montgomery of Alamein ('official' in the sense that he had unrestricted access to all the personal family documents). His first of two volumes carries the story up to and including the initial realisation of success at the battle of Alamein and thus encompasses a considerable span of time — 55 years. It follows the future field-marshal through a none too happy childhood, through the demands and excesses of the first world war in France and Flanders and the initiation of a complete philosophy about the conduct of land battles, a late, happy but tragically short marriage, the proving of the military philosophy in France and Belgium in 1940 with the consequent acceleration to command of an army and, shortly, a group of armies as the allied war effort rose to a peak of capability.

Considering the complexity of connected events and the range of associated personalities, Mr Hamilton has succeeded pretty well in revealing many sides of this extraordinary man. The errors and omissions of the volume arise principally because, in dealing with a man absorbed by the profession of soldiering throughout adult life, the author lacks sufficient knowledge of that profession to appreciate what is and what is not in certain matters significant. In this context he has, besides, made one or two factual mistakes — for example 'In the ensuing years he would command every unit of the British Army from a platoon to a Group of Armies . . . no other Commander would ever follow such a linear path' (p 184). Well, how about Slim, or Alexander? We also find one or two howlers concerning events in the first world war. I found the iteration and reiteration of psychological influences tedious, especially when leading to frequent use of that phrase much to be avoided by historians 'he/she must have thought . . .'

Still, though not insignificant, these blemishes do not obscure the merit of bringing to life the army commander who defeated Rommel, perhaps the foremost tactical practitioner of his time. In later years, it has become fashionable to decry this success; at least to explain it in terms which deny to Montgomery any special merit in its accomplishment. Auchinleck by legacy or Alexander by quiet influence really deserve the credit, some have said. Others remark that Montgomery had all the resources and used them so cautiously as almost to waste them. Or, yet others say, it was the service of the air or the navy or Ultra information.

For those who served in the Mediterranean, particularly those in subordinate positions, Montgomery was the commander we knew and in whom, for good reason, we had faith. No doubt he made errors — more than he cared to admit then or, indeed, later, when he was increasingly corrupted by van-

Science Fact

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Fiction

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ity. But he was not a butcher general and not a haverer. He brought us success when we needed it most. The soldiers on the ground knew that in their bones: they had the sharpened instinct of men whose lives are at stake.

Nigel Hamilton has succeeded in illuminating not only how the commander operated at Alamein but how he had reached the base line of the operation. A personal though much younger friend of the field-marshal, he has not allowed himself to be partial or prejudiced. He has written quite simply the best biography of Montgomery yet to emerge and I wait with pleasurable anticipation for the second volume to appear.

FICTION

Alan Hollinghurst

Ways of escape

Maggie Muggins, or Spring in Earl's Court by KEITH WATERHOUSE *Michael Joseph* £6.95

Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi by JORGE LUIS BORGES & ADOLFO BIOY-CASARES *Allen Lane* £5.95

The Uninvited Guest by RONALD DUNCAN *Rebel Press (Element Books)* £3.95

In Keith Waterhouse's succession of funny and original novels since *Billy Liar* in 1960 he has compacted two kinds of comedy: a relentlessly observant ridicule of the world, and a private systematisation of things carried out by the characters to protect themselves from their uncharitable and ridiculous circumstances. Billy Fisher coded this technique in the form of Number One and Number Two Thinking, escaping into the infantile gratification of Ambrosia when real life grew nasty, and suffering in the unfantastic adult world as a consequence. In *Maggie Muggins* this inward and outward bifocal view, with its capacity for pathos as well as resilience, is presented in a new way.

Maggie Moon is a victim of life, constantly moving from bedsit to bedsit, leaving a trail of old addresses and failed lives behind her. She is now making the final arrangements to have her illegitimate child adopted, on the same day that her one true friend, gay Sean, throws himself under a train at Fulham Broadway. But Maggie, when not so 'legless' as to remember nothing, is observant, and Waterhouse conspires with her in the task of anatomising the meanness and oddness of modern London. This can be an upsetting business: the old ladies whose gentility turns to disgust as they potter through Earl's Court are the victims of what they see: 'They noticed everything. Noticing was what had driven them crazy.' Few novelists have noticed so much of the cityscape or reported it with such unfailing accuracy as Waterhouse, but for him sanity is preserved by the mordant humour and satirical toughness of his vision.

Maggie's further means of keeping sane is the Dickensian fashion in which her imagination transmogrifies the London streets: the entrance to Earl's Court Station is humanised by a habit of fantasy, and becomes a Galleria with a Piazza beyond it, in which the crowds of people are tamed by her categorisation of them. The long 'milk-round' she makes to collect mail from all her old addresses is another and more poignant way of giving formal significance to amorphous and painful experience — as is the habit she and Sean had of turning disasters into jokes, working them up into acts which can then be laughed at. Waterhouse makes Maggie's act more pathetic by giving her a faded slang to speak — 'bijou surprisette' &c — which is not intended to be funny and which in its monotony realistically shows the extent to which she is trapped in her anonymous jargon just as she is in the anonymous city. The excellently tight circular construction of the novel further consolidates the impression of a life which avoids the tyranny of despair only by the fertility and anarchy of the sense of humour.

Six Problems for Don Isidro Parodi is translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni and was originally published in 1942 under the pseudonym of H. Bustos Domecq, a memoir of whom is contributed by one of the characters as a way of preparing one for the sequence of metaphorical illusions and conjurings which subsequently take place. Parodi is in gaol (on a false charge?) and men and women of Buenos Aires bring him their problems which, though he is deprived of any of the paraphernalia of detection, he unravels for them by the time of their next visit. His solutions to crimes are demonstrations of the liberty of the intellect, and the six stories reduce to the absurd the fictional tradition on which they depend. Parodi's parodies of Holmesian acumen, which make the revelations as brief and mechanical as possible, also rob the chase of any interest — 'our author concentrates on the main events in his cases — the statement of the problem and its illuminating solution' — and instead expose the lack of veracity and self-knowledge of the story-telling victims and defendants. These story-tellers all speak in an intensely artificial way, bombastic, obfuscatory to the point of impenetrability, veering from slang to outrageous rhetoric in a melange of Chandler and Poe. Narrative is concentrated and minimalised, and manner luxuriates and chokes itself. A fetishistic reverence is paid to details of dress:

> dressed in a Houdin opera hat, a Chamberlain monocle, a sentimental black mustache, an overcoat with mink collar and cuffs, a stiff collar with a single Mendax pearl, footwear by Nimbo, and gloves by Bulpington.

Amusing as all this can be, the arch self-knowingness and clogged cleverness of the book make it virtually unreadable.

Ronald Duncan's new stories are said to spring not from the affectionate disrespect of the parodist but from some private purgative necessity: 'His motives were selfish: these stories perched uninvited on his mind; he wrote them down to scare them away.' One would not have guessed as much from reading them: they are enjoyable enough, well-written and shapely, but banal in their very elegance and symmetry. Their targets — frigidity, ignorance, the undeveloped heart — need a more striking treatment to rescue them from conventionality; the title-story, narrated by Death, is the most interesting, but it is still distinctly trivial.

Francis Wheen

Proper Charlie

Charles Charming's Challenges On The Pathway To The Throne by CLIVE JAMES illustrations by MARC *Cape* £4.95

> 'I hope it is in good plain verse,' said my uncle, 'none of your hurry-scurry anapaests, as you call them, in lines which sober people are reading for plain heroics.'

Thus the Prologue to A.H. Clough's *Dipsychus*. Clive James has chosen to ignore this advice. The versification in his previous three epic poems — *Peregrine Prykke, Felicity Fark* and *Britannia Bright* — was far from perfect, but it was much better than that in *Charles Charming*. Take this line:

> ...As down them the gun carriage slowly *rolled*...

It consists of an iambic foot followed by two anapaests (not even hurry-scurry ones) followed by a final iamb. Clive James asks us to suspend our disbelief and accept this little half-caste as an iambic pentameter. James also seems to think that the word 'police' has only one syllable (p.74), 'terrific' has only two (pp.25 and 86) and, most bafflingly of all, 'cabinet' has two (p.90):

> A matter that my Cabinet might discuss.

The rhymes, too, are even more cloth-eared than before. Here, as in the previous volumes, some of the eccentricities can be accounted for by James's Australian upbringing (thus we have 'Aston Martin' rhymed with 'carton' and, hideously, 'austerity' with 'rarity'). But having made such an allowance we can still, surely, not excuse pairings such as 'richer' and 'picture' (p. 76) or 'scrum' and 'aplomb' (p. 45).

It is easy to tell what Clive James will make of the remarks above: when the *New Statesman* made similar criticisms of *Britannia Bright* he wrote: 'It is plainly to be my fate, which I am already used to, that my

Adam Phillips

A view of the park

The arbiters of taste push
prams like idle mowers,
through clear afternoons

the spell-bound sleep . . .
Adrift on the lake
there are swans folded,

a gardener is tearing
strips off the lawn;
it can't go on like this

the women are convinced.
The sun has begun to tangle
the beds, the shadows

are making a difference;
the gnats will complicate,
the children will wake

and swans bury their heads
for some impossible
disparity of white.

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poems shall be reviewed by hacks and dolts'. More disinterested readers may feel that I am being curmudgeonly or nit-picking (though I'm not sure why 'nit-picking' should be used only in a resoundingly pejorative sense — should one let sleeping nits lie?). But in fact the failings of rhyme and scansion are symptomatic of the failings of the poem as a whole. A successful mock

epic must be written *con brio*; in *Charles Charming,* however, one is constantly stubbing one's toe on bad rhymes, false quantities and, above all, passages which seem to be included simply as a means of filling the book out:

> The Golden Coach went by. The Queen inside
> it
> Was radiant and did not try to hide it...

Didn't she, by Jove?

Of course *Charles Charming* has its good points; in a poem of about 2,000 lines, written by a man of wit and learning, it would be surprising if this were not the case. The story, such as it is, follows Prince Charles from his birth to the present day. But the *funniest moments, significantly,* are when James moves from Buck House to the worlds of literature and the media, where a metropolitan critic feels more at home. These were the settings for his first epics, *Prykke* and *Fark,* which is why those two poems were more satisfying than *Bright* (which dealt with politics) and *Charming.* James takes advantage of Charles's spell at university by giving us splendid parodies of the speech patterns of A.J.Ayer, Isaiah Berlin and Helen Gardner. Even James's old joke about Leavis's passion for D.H.Lawrence is wheeled out again to good effect, and Alan Whicker's commentary on the Jubilee ('The cool, crowned, cutie-pie we call the Queen...') is a delight.

However, these few flashes are not enough — especially because in the final book of the poem James comes over all serious. He appears to argue that HRH Big-Ears is our best defence against a Hitler or a Stalin ever coming to power in this country. Indeed by the end one feels that if James had a forelock to tug he would be pulling it like billy-o. He may yet make the next honours list. □

Hilary Wainwright

Unlocking the modern state

Slump City: The Politics of Mass Unemployment by A. FRIEND & A. METCALF *Pluto* £3.95

Reports from the recent People's March suggested that it was a focus for new alliances between the employed and the unemployed. Most important among such alliances are those between trade unions on the one hand and, on the other, women, blacks and young people whose problems have all too often been ignored by the unions. *Slump City* is about the urgency of such alliances — urgent because Tory policies feed off and deepen divisions between the decreasing number of employed, relatively well paid, predominantly white, male workers and the growing population of predominantly black and/or female people, under 25 or over 50, who cannot find even a foothold in the main sectors of the British economy.

Many of this latter group are trapped in the decaying inner cities. *Slump City* shows how, in contrast to the 1930s, the variations in unemployment are not so much between regions but between the core of the major cities and on the other hand the suburbs and separate small towns. Does this matter? Unemployment is unemployment whatever its 'spatial distribution'. The theme of this book is that it does matter: to fight unemployment in the inner city areas requires a political strategy which puts issues of sex, race and youth as well as class at the centre of its concerns.

These are the authors' conclusions. But first they explain why the present economic stagnation has a disproportionate effect on some sections of the working class. Their analysis is thorough and, with its concentration on London and especial reference to Brixton, it is also timely. As far as the newly-elected Labour GLC is concerned, the implications of Friend's and Metcalf's study are daunting. Not only is the GLC up against Heseltine; it also faces a massive task of reconstruction from the havoc wrought by major industrial corporations and property speculators. Just to illustrate: between 1966 and 1974 Greater London lost 27 per cent of its manufacturing jobs, largely because the corporations found it more profitable to move elsewhere. And according to Friend and Metcalf no amount of planning incentives will bring them back.

The activities of property companies are shown to be equally damaging. For example, in Brixton in the late '60s local councillors tried to 'harness private capital' to regenerate the area. After raising high expectations among local people the private developers withdrew from the scheme with the collapse of the property boom in 1973. The same property group has since been investing in such projects as the £39m shopping centre in Milton Keynes.

It is these company strategies rather than any mysterious ups and downs of the trade cycle which have produced the slump cities of Britain. And according to this book it would not be enough for Labour councils simply to reflate the urban economies, even if they could; for the problem is not merely one of resources. The authors found, in their involvement in housing campaigns in Brixton, a deeply rooted suspicion towards the supposedly benevolent institutions of the welfare state. They show that there are good grounds for these perceptions of a state made up of institutions which define rather than respond to people's needs. For this the authors conclude that:

> We have to raise the question of the local working class defining its own needs, and in that process redefining the nature of the services which are required.

This requires, they say, alliances between public sector workers and the consumers of these services. This raises a whole new set of problems about people's needs as workers and needs as consumers. On this Friend and Metcalf are a little vague, but there is a growing literature trying to tackle these problems. It is part of a very important shift in the emphasis of socialist politics away from extending the existing state towards the problem of how to control the resources locked up within that state and its allies. □

POLITICAL EXTREMISM

is the subject of *Left Right* by John Tomlinson which examines the National Front, the Socialist Workers Party and the many groups on both sides of the political spectrum who believe in violence and extreme measures to further their cause, a timely and alarming book (£4.95 paper). David Mercer, who died last year, was one of the outstanding political and psychological dramatists of the last 25 years. His *Collected TV Plays,* which radically changed TV drama, are elegant, dialectical examinations of British society. Published in 2 volumes (each £6.95 & £3.95 paper). *Gambit 36* covers British and European political theatre. *Gambit 37* is devoted to Tom Stoppard and includes Kenneth Tynan's famous attack and replies to it. (£2.00 each). Subscriptions to Britain's liveliest drama quarterly are £7.50.

J. B. PRIESTLEY

essayist, polemicist, popular novelist, and avant garde playwright, whose interest in time and the supernatural gives an extra dimension to his work, is thoroughly examined in *J. B. Priestley: The Last of the Sages.* John Atkins' revealing study is a sympathetic but not uncritical view of the most English of writers,whose personality is often complex and contradictory (£15). Reviewers agree that William Burroughs' *Cities of the Red Night* is his major work since *The Naked Lunch,* a multi-level narrative that travels through time from the distant past to the terrifying future. Erotic obsessions, thriller techniques, myth and fantasy and an extraordinary gallery of characters enrich the outstanding literary masterpiece of the year (£9.95). Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style,* 99 ways of telling an incident (paper £3.50), and *We Always Treat Women Too Well,* an erotically uproarious novel set in the Dublin 1916 Rising (£8.95), show two sides of the wittiest of French writers.

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BALLET

Stephanie Jordan

Fifty years on

Keystone

Ashton and Fonteyn in the 1950s

ALTHOUGH THE fiftieth anniversary season of the Royal Ballet draws to a close this week after a special period at Covent Garden involving both companies, the celebrations continue. The birthday mood permeates the whole of 1981 with revivals of former successes, the publication of books on company history, exhibitions, TV and radio programmes.

Now, at the end of this season, it is truly astonishing to consider what has grown from that first performance on 5th May 1931 at the Old Vic. On that occasion, in a collection of short pieces all by Ninette de Valois, a product of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, it was an ad hoc assembly of nineteen dancers, forerunners of our present massive, international two-company institution. Largely through the administrative and creative genius of de Valois and of choreographer Frederick Ashton, it has become an enterprise with a recognisably national character and versatility to its credit, in both classics and new ballets, indigenous and foreign choreography, with a roster of excellent soloists and a matchless *corps de ballet*.

The splendour of fifty years' achievement was expressed in a surprise anniversary programme, on 29-30 May. Written and presented by Fonteyn's one-time partner, Michael Somes, with the aid of slides and incidental music, it was a telescoped history of the company in a series of extracts from the early de Valois *Job* (1931) through to new works by the young David Bintley, Michael Corder and Jonathan Burrows, and Kenneth Macmillan's very recent *Isadora*.

Many of the works featured can still be enjoyed as part of the repertoire of both companies: the more interesting by the Sadler's Wells Company, possibly because they were created for its home theatre. We saw Roland Price dance a solo from *Danses Concertantes,* Macmillan's choreographic debut (1955); Marion Tait and Desmond Kelly providing a gripping interpretation of the rape scene from *The Invitation,* the Macmillan ballet which offered Lynn Seymour her first major role (1960); the sublime *pas de deux* from Ashton's *The Two Pigeons* (1961) danced by Doreen Wells and Carl Myers, performers in the full work when the Sadler's Wells company took over at Covent Garden last week. But we were also reminded of important works sadly lost from the repertoire or works that have survived only as fragmented treasures like Ashton's *Nocturne* (1936); the fascinating extract available was the lovelorn flower-girl's solo, originally danced by Fonteyn, now by Marguerite Porter. A witty, finger-snapping solo from John Cranko's *The Prince of the Pagodas* (1957) once danced by Merle Park is now perfect for the quick, exuberant Lesley Collier.

The richness of the RB dancers, as much as of its repertoire, was on display, particularly apparent in the various *pas de deux.* For me, the high point of the evening was Ashton's *pas de deux* in *The Dream.* Danced by the original Oberon and Titania, suddenly it made new sense with Antoinette Sibley's delicacy and warmth, Anthony Dowell's authority, their combined magic.

Several excerpts for large groups included a memorable episode from *Paquita,* performed by SWRB and led with great dignity and brilliance by Galina Samsova and David Ashmole. An appropriate if not the most popular choice concluded the evening, *Les Noces* (1923), pride and joy of the Covent Garden company.

To conclude, the entire company assembled on stage: dancers and choreographers past and present, not only Margot Fonteyn, the company's only ever *prima ballerina assoluta,* but the now legendary Anton Dolin and Alicia Markova, their presence affirming the RB's continuing claim to be a true descendant of the Ballets Russes.

The actual RB birthday was marked by a gala performance of *Sleeping Beauty.* Now in its fifth production since the first of 1939, it has already been associated with some of the company's most memorable occasions. Lesley Collier, a charming, zestful Aurora, was initially unsteady but radiant and precise in the last act. Stephen Jefferies (replacing an injured David Wall), a somewhat gentle prince, evoked confidence in his nobility. Monica Mason's wicked fairy, Carabosse, stole the show with a conviction in her portrayal that was missing from many of the other dancers that night, at least until Act III, when everyone warmed to the spirit of this superb production.

Uneven performance marred several other pieces at Covent Garden this year. Saddest of all, Ashton's *A Month in the Country* has lost much of the detail and vitality it once had; it needs a rest and rehearsal to steer it out of the doldrums.

It is a measure of the RB's greatness that its two companies have managed to cope with the overwhelming and continuous performance schedule of the last six weeks. And this season they have been beset with injuries. It was good to see two of our strongest male dancers, Anthony Dowell and David Wall, formerly indisposed, in the anniversary performances.

One principal who has definitely suffered from being given far too much to do is Marguerite Porter, prematurely allotted many big parts. She resembles Fonteyn on stage, but it is as if this undoubted attribute is used to camouflage her lack of preparation. Yet we do occasionally glimpse quality that could be nurtured with time and patience. On the other hand, Wendy Ellis's dancing has matured quietly and steadily with the strain of a series of leading roles. If she danced Princess Florine from *Sleeping Beauty* rather cautiously on Gala night, she handled with sensitivity diverse parts in *Gloria, A Month in the Country* (as Vera), and the *Ondine divertissement.*

WITH THE creative future of the RB very much in mind, the attention of the critics was drawn specifically to a programme of new works by five young choreographers of both companies. Large group pieces were presented by the familiar choreographers, Bintley and Corder, smaller works by Jennifer Jackson, Derek Deane and Burrows. My favourite was Burrow's solo *With a Gaping Wide-mouthed Waddling Frog,* fresh, witty, diverse and rhythmically interesting, its folk flavour enhanced by the informal presence of musicians on stage. It suggested a genuine, natural talent and it didn't hark back obviously to any sources within the RB. Alas, for the other pieces, almost alone among critics, I felt no excitement and was disappointed by the lack of ideas or a distinctive voice from the next generation.

More exciting was the work of younger dancers we've seen this season, particularly the women. As a result of a recent policy to offer them more challenge, we have seen many newcomers in both big and small solo parts. Two tall twenty year old members of the *corps* have been allocated leading roles and have done well, Fiona Chadwick in *The Firebird* last November, Briony Brind in *Swan Lake* in April; both are going from strength to strength.

Such is the promise of the dancers who will take the company far into the future. Meanwhile, in the 1980s, the RB is so much part of our culture that it is hard to believe that it has only existed since 1931. Its worldwide popularity and influence and its high standards guarantee its continued existence. Such a body is unlikely to respond to or be susceptible to criticism. 'Let us do it our way', said Dame Ninette, characteristically firm in her post-Birthday Gala speech, and she received a round of applause, for she was dispelling widespread anxiety about the future of her company. If this command was inspired by the same prescience that prompted her remark at the inception of the Vic Wells Company fifty years ago, that she only needed ten years to build a major company, we would be wrong to contradict. □

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TELEVISION

William Boyd

Missing the joke

IT'S PERHAPS a measure of the classic status of *The Caretaker* (BBC-1) that personal notions of how it should be played are so hard to dislodge. Despite Pinter's seal of approval I thought Warren Mitchell's Welsh accent in the role of the tramp was a dreadful mistake, but I was steadily won over by a superbly quirky and studied performance. You can see the logic of this course of action. In a sense Davies is a prototype Alf Garnett, with his selfish moaning and resolute racist xenophobia, and director Kenneth Ives was absolutely correct to try and avoid setting up that kind of recognition in the minds of the audience. Unfortunately this had the effect of lessening the comedy of the play — which is present in nearly all Pinter — to a considerable degree. The extremely funny monologue where Davies relates how he tries to scrounge a pair of shoes from the inmates of a monastery in Luton (a burly monk tells him to 'Piss off out of it') seemed to be finished in a trice, with Mitchell rattling through the lines at high speed in a garrulous Welsh lilt.

This was something of a shame because Pinter's genuine comic talent is frequently overlooked in the po-faced academic reverence (or wild denigration) with which he is generally regarded. He should, as often as possible, be played for the uncomfortable laughs that his particular comedy of aggression generates. People are always abusing each other in Pinter plays, from feelings of real hatred and resentment, but in a harmless slangy manner ('you dirty old prat', 'God, you stink'). Powerful emotions unleashed by an old and well tried comic device. It's one of Pinter's claims to fame that he's thoroughly renovated and explored its potential.

His other is, of course, his 'discovery' of the latent significance residing in the most banal or innocuous discourse — a feature that was expertly rendered in this production. 'Every word you speak,' Mick says to Davies, 'is open to any number of interpretations.' That's really all that Pinter's trying to put across — a commendable aim — and the production sensibly didn't seek to provide numinous or elemental interpretations of the ill-fitting shoes, the drip in the bucket or the papers in Sidcup. You could make of them what you liked. Excellent performances all round. Aston was played by Kenneth Cranham; Mick by Jonathan Pryce, who, I thought, could have been a trace more menacing or malevolent, but that was maybe because, to my ears, he sounded disconcertingly like David Essex.

A good week for drama and, by coincidence, for plays with one set and an all male cast of three. Such was the format for *Nailed* (Granada) where, for the second time in a month (the first was in *Psy Warriors*) Colin Blakely played an interrogator. Blakely dropped his role as icily efficient psychoanalyst to take up one as an RUC constable trying covertly to elicit confessions from IRA suspects at a Belfast holding centre. The play opened with Blakely, unshaven and in civvies, talking tactics with the young RUC constable (Colm Meaney) who mans the tape recorders outside the interrogation room. They enact the routine (Blakely badmouths constable, gets a fist in the gut) that will lull the real IRA suspect into thinking Blakely's a real IRA suspect too.

Everything goes fine. Blakely gets hit, gags and retches all round the room and the young suspect is duly horrified (a first rate performance of pasty-faced, sphincter-loosening fear from Liam Neeson) and is happily responsive to Blakely's questions. However, and here the success of the play hinges on a large dose of dramatic irony, the young man — who's suspected of being an IRA recruiter and general propagandist — is actually deeply unsympathetic to the aims of the IRA, and has a quiet respect for the job the security forces are doing.

The irony increases when Blakely learns that the suspect's fiancée is in hospital, recovering from a nervous breakdown after witnessing her father's murder by the UVF. Even confronted by this evidence the suspect (it will have become clear that none of the characters was named) refuses to make a stand. The way to solve the problems of modern Ireland, the suspect yells in the face of Blakely's remorseless goading, is for people 'to stop making bloody stands'.

Taking place in a minimalist set — room, table, two chairs — the play allowed several key moral issues of the Ulster problem to be debated, while advancing a plea for a *cultiver notre jardin* approach. Although at times the 'rhetoric' of its concerns was a little too obvious and over-directed, it was saved from table-thumping didacticism or moral bullying by a script of exemplary understatement (writer: Bill Anderson) and marvellously poised and suggestive performances by the two principals.

INTERROGATION of a milder sort on the *South Bank Show* (LWT) which investigated both ends of the poetry spectrum. At the top there was a rewarding film of the brilliant young poet Craig Raine who explained his work with admirable lucidity and convincing verve. Asked by Bragg what he would say to some critics, who claim to be unable to perceive any 'depth' beneath the surface skill and art, Raine wisely bit back his initial retort and contented himself with an expressive and quite sufficient 'Balls!'

In fact the whole film proved a highly successful formula; a mixture of interview, film of Raine *en famille*, voice-over readings and type-written texts. At one stage I thought the *Nationwide* syndrome might strike again with armies of picture researchers trying feverishly to come up with a visual representation of every one of Raine's metaphors. But overall the editing and research were extremely effective, and in the case of one poem 'The Train Set', exceptionally so. In fact the *SBS* produced a model of how to present poetry on TV, and thereby kicked the legs out from beneath the programme's other offering, an edited rendition of Clive James's *Charles Charming* mock epic. James looked remarkably like Bob Hoskins in *The Long Good Friday* and seemed uncomfortable and ill-at-ease in his tuxedo, particularly when Bragg later gave him something of a grilling — by Bragg standards — about the quality of the verse. Bragg's hostility wasn't really necessary as we'd just been listening to the stuff. Despite the game efforts of Pamela Stephenson and Russell Davies it couldn't help bringing to mind Pope's well known lines — or is it Dryden? . . . Rochester? somebody's, anyway — which go, if I can quote them accurately:

> Silke-Purse it as they may, it rests, I fear,
> A stubborn untransformable, Sowe's Ear.

THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

Fight the cuts

Having a Ball by ALAN BLEASDALE *Lyric, Hammersmith*
These Men by MAYO SIMON *Bush*
Billy Bishop Goes to War by JOHN GRAY *Comedy*
The Caretaker by HAROLD PINTER *Lyttelton*

Farce, to function effectively, needs the tension that comes from the threat of disaster. It needs anxiety and fear, teetering towards panic; and that makes vasectomy, which the dim male id perceives as a class of castration, and even the educated ego thinks might involve all sorts of adventitious slips and snips, a suitable subject for its attention. Pretty funny the stretched nerves and consequent cavortings in Alan Bleasdale's imaginary clinic turn out to be, too. Lenny (Philip Donaghy) has already chickened out three times at the last moment, and is discovered phoning his child-ridden wife: 'What I want to know is, is this my final decision?' Luckily for him, the day's operating list throws up a distraction in the form of a childhood enemy (Bill Stewart), whom he proceeds to torment with lurid tales of septic scrota. Add a local government bigwig (Peter Postlethwaite) with a tipsy wife (Julie Walters) in tow, a deaf oldster (George Cooper) who has just discovered the joys of sex, and a grimly purposeful surgeon who happens to be female, and we've a series of situations readily exploitable for what, since the humour derives from character and language as well as from extravagant incident, I'd better redefine as 'farcical comedy'. Vodka in the water-jug, a bedpan coyly shielding genitalia from prying female eyes, a chase down the sanitised corridors with a prone body on a trolley: I, who rarely crack a smirk in the theatre these days, laughed often and freely.

Of course, not all the fun comes logically from the presence stage-left of the lady with the knife. More importantly, nor do Mr Bleasdale's cosmological musings on matters nuclear. Donaghy, you see, is wanly sterilising himself because he sees no future for the race. Postlethwaite is one of those who will be issuing draconian edicts from bunkers when the big bang comes, which explains Walters's cracked anguishings over her Smirnoff. Even Cooper is there to represent the resilience of life and hope. Mr Bleasdale can, of course, cite both the precedent

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of Shaw, who based the broadest arguments on the flimsiest events, and the inadequacy of some of his contemporaries, who funk the big moral issues while piously embracing the smaller. Yet by the time the case for the selective assassination of our local warlords has been hesitantly put, we do feel the debate has considerably outrun the dramatic justification offered by what is, after all, still a farcical comedy: you just can't take Bleasdale as seriously as he hopes.

There's an unreconstructed side of me, the one that swaggers and burps about town in bovver boots and a lapel-badge emblazoned 'MCP', which was ready to resent Mr Mayo Simon's tale of the two young women, one a raunchy man-hunter and the other a nail-gnawing waif, who become flatmates, rivals, friends and, since they share the same palpitating waterbed, maybe even more. Sheer propaganda (and written by a sex-traitor), implying that this relationship is far profounder than any they could have had with the unseen blades who begin by obsessing them! Loaded propaganda, too. Would even California, where the play is set, throw up as seamy a cross-section of bed-fellows as the only men apparently available to our heroines seem to be?

Actually, even my reconstructed self feels there's force in this last objection. I certainly have doubts about the justice of the ending, which suggests that getting married and having children is almost as much a sell-out as is continuing to run a dial-a-stud service for your own exclusive use. Yet this is a pretty inadequate summary of a play which proves once again that there are more interesting American dramatists about than British chauvinism cares to concede. Though it starts by showing symptoms of the incipient Neil Simons — an illness which consists of cosily celebrating the funky, kooky and oddball and somehow rendering the unsentimental sentimental — by the end it has established plausible characters and living, evolving contact between them.

I REVIEWED *Billy Bishop* from Edinburgh last year, and see no need to revise my doubts about the play or my admiration for its sole performer. There's no reason, I suppose, why its story of the Canadian idler who became the allies' number-one pilot in 1918 should have to become a bald denunciation of sanctioned slaughter; but it would be nice to know a little more of how a man can shoot, burn or smash 50, 60, 70 fellow-beings with only one passing twinge of distaste. The show's only explanation is implicit and possibly unintentional, that he was a plucky sap incapable of introspection. Yet in spite of this, in spite of too much paranoid-colonial fun at the expense of the snooty English, it makes an unusually absorbing evening; and the reason, quite simply, is Eric Peterson, who can be ingenuous and baleful and somehow both at once, and, stepping out of Billy Bishop's skin in the time it takes to twist a shoulder or crook a knee, can evoke anything and anyone from gouty generals to musky *chanteuses* to the planes themselves, looping, losing height, clattering to the ground.

At the National, Pinter's *Caretaker* has gone black: meaning that it has been recast, with Oscar James a gentle, dreamy giant as the mentally damaged Aston, Troy Foster a fine, peppy Mick who lapses in extremis from his adopted Cockney into a fraught Caribbean, and Norman Beaton as Davies the tramp. The problem isn't so much that this character's dislike of blacks has to become an example of prejudice within the coloured community itself, with 'Africans' substituting for the 'Indians' invoked in the original text: you get more oddity, incongruity and general dramatic licence in most Shakespeare productions nowadays. No, it is that Mr Beaton, while projecting the sourness and greed whose omission badly flawed Warren Mitchell's playing of the part, also loses the variety Mitchell injected into it. He's the territorial predator Davies should be; but somewhat monotonal. And yet when all's said and counter-said, Kenneth Ives's production proves what he clearly hoped, that this is one of the very few modern plays true, large and mysterious enough to embrace a diversity of interpretations.

FILMS

John Coleman

Playing at home

Gregory's Girl (A) *Screen on the Green; Cinecenta; Ritzy, Brixton; Odeon, Kensington.*

And Quiet Rolls the Dawn (A) *Gate, Notting Hill*

The Competition (A) *Columbia*

Maybe Scottish isn't foreign enough. If Bill Forsyth had been Czech, like Milos Forman, or Italian, like Ermanno Olmi, his two beautiful films would surely have been more rapturously and rapidly received. Forman and Olmi are not idly invoked. The great virtue of such early works as *Peter and Pavla* and *A Blonde in Love*, of *Il Posto* and *I Fidanzati* was the universality of their appeal, a very accessible humanity which drew strength — and it is no paradox — from their affectionate rootedness in small, local communities. God knows, if there is to be a British cinema other than on television it will be through British directors taking a close look at Britain. 'And maybe,' Forsyth has said, 'that means being self-consciously provincial for a while.' If *That Sinking Feeling* (see last week's column) and now *Gregory's Girl* are the outcome, let provincialism thrive.

Gregory's Girl offers a faintly pixilated view of teenage schoolchildren in a New Town on the fringes of Glasgow. The amiable, beanstalk hero (Gordon John Sinclair) is suddenly smitten by the cool Dorothy (Dee Hepburn), a welcome recruit to the school's disastrous football team: he watches, fuming, from goal as both sides heartily embrace her after she scores. All the boys and most of the male teachers are touched with obsessions: Andy (splendid Robert Buchanan again) disburses useless facts about cornflakes, veal and the male-female ratio in Caracas; another is a camera freak; another a great pastry-cook, in cahoots with a sweet-toothed headmaster. This head unconcernedly plays a merry piano during lunch-time hubbub: 'Off you go, you small boys,' he orders some wondering by-standers. A penguin bemusedly waddles down corridors, mis-directed by snapping teachers. Doughnuts and photos of Dorothy are flogged in the sort of market-cum-meeting-place which is the boys' loos. The girls show maturer, if gentle profiles. Gregory's diminutive sister (Allison Forster) offers wise counsel, on a roundabout, tidying him for a date, welcoming him home after.

And that date turns out to involve a delightful conspiracy of adolescent women. 'It's just the way girls work,' explains one Susan (Clare Grogan). 'They help each other.' As they lie chastely side by side in a night park together, Gregory teaches her horizontal dancing, the dangers of sliding off the earth, and the camera wonderfully tilts to the fantasy. Forsyth somehow has everyone, from the least experienced actor up, performing like seasoned pros, meticulously right. But his highest achievement comes perhaps in the little enchainments of gags, squibbing along seamlessly *and* in character. When a weedy games master drops his whistle in the soup, there is more to follow. A brief, dry encounter between Gregory and his driving-instructor dad is at once hilarious *and* speaking about that old generation-gap. Best sign of all for his future, Forsyth is quite spendthrift of notions, observations, insights, the visual invention as prodigal as the verbal. 'There's definitely something in the air tonight,' says eager wee Andy to his chum. Definitely.

Mrinal Sen's unhappily titled *And Quiet Rolls the Dawn* (the Russian echo seems meaningless) is a powerful and tense drama, a storm that shatters an Indian teacup. The eldest daughter and chief wage-earner of a large, tenement-dwelling Calcutta family fails to come home at the usual time. As alarm shifts gear into panic (there is a visit to the mortuary and a visit from the police), the family disintegrates under the pressure, ugly recriminations set up, neighbours kindly and malevolent pay calls. Sen keeps a pretty tight rein on the melodramatic potential of his subject, splendidly recreating the crowded, eavesdropping life of the galleried tenement and its courtyard, making vivid excursions in the abruptly baleful city. Sounds grittily punctuate the action: the ghastly metallic scrape of bodies lugged out for inspection at the morgue; the heavy tick of a clock; the clatter of printing presses as newspaper headlines proclaim the fate of lost girls; the noise of a taxi finally bringing the daughter back, her and the family's reputation gone. 'I've become a slut in these few hours,' she says, angrily voicing the film's theme.

Written and directed by Joel Oliansky, *The Competition* is super-kitsch, arguably more deleterious than your everyday kitsch. Richard Dreyfuss, under a Gene Kelly-angled cap, is 30, a pianist who *needs* to win at a festival, Amy Irving a rich-kid fellow-competitor for whom he reluctantly falls. 'I wanted to climb inside you and pull you around me like a blanket,' he confesses, speaking for others in the audience. Elsewhere, Mr Oliansky's dialogue is more knowingly brittle and the whole smart package, with Lee Remick as Amy's elegant teacher and Sam Wanamaker doing a *nice* Bernstein, has a certain Godawful appeal. Full marks, anyway, for the fingering.

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ART

John Spurling

Flying colours

Important XIX and XX Century Works of Art *Lefevre*
Bridget Riley *Rowan & Warwick Arts Trust*

Perhaps the best place to start looking at Bridget Riley's new work is behind the Rowan Gallery, at the Lefevre, which is showing one of Bonnard's grand bathroom paintings. The colours in this painting are localised, so that one can say that woman's body is golden orange, shadowed with purple and crimson; the tiles blue, blotched with pink; and the floor orange with green spots, inverted by shadow to green with orange spots; but the colours also seem to float off or only temporarily to have settled over the solid objects. The white bath and towel at bottom left are as it were the sober reality of white light, white canvas and mere everyday objects outlined in space from which the adjacent kaleidoscope, orgy, vision of paradise has been conjured.

Yet the sense of solidity remains behind the play of colours and the evident handwork of the artist is part of its presence. Seurat has been a greater influence than Bonnard on Bridget Riley, since Seurat's play of colours was more independent both of the objects it played over and of the artist himself — it was, or purported to be, more scientific, which is to say more natural, less romantic. Even so Seurat's objects retain a frozen, monumental aspect in reaction to the steady sparkle of light particles over them. To remove the objects altogether would be to set the colours free, to engage with them before they had ever touched down on the earth's surface, confusing themselves in the process with extraneous items such as bodies or bathroom walls and entirely separate concepts such as space, depth, volume or texture. Why, after all, should the artist direct attention to an apple on a plate when what she is interested in is not the chance form but the universal relationships of constancy and change, rhythm and repetition which it or any other form momentarily accommodates? Must Mozart, like Satie, compose a piece in the shape of a pear?

Riley began with black and white only to get her eye in, to limit the range of relationships. Even then, in order to avoid the tyranny of shapes, however abstract, she restricted herself to massed geometrical units — stripes, circles, dots, triangles, ovals, squares — and made sure, by employing assistants, that the finished work was impersonal in touch. Nothing was to be 'natural' except the one thing that mattered, the structure of relationships. And when she at last ventured to confront the infinite possibilities of colour, she reduced its vehicle still further, virtually to stripes alone. The narrowing down of the point of attack, in other words, is in inverse proportion to the scope of the engagement. Just as the Cubists more or less ignored colour in their post-Cézanne search for form, so Riley, far out beyond the still partial colourism of Seurat, Bonnard and even late Monet, could not now, even if she wanted to, reintroduce form without abandoning her increasingly heated engagement with colour.

Enjoying Riley's paintings is easy, since colour, like tunes in music, is the most immediately accessible ingredient in visual art. The difficulty is to see what one is enjoying. We are used to the idea that a few people can draw better than others and that there is a rare skill, say, in painting the appearance of flesh or a room reflected in a pearl. It is harder to appreciate that the same applies to relationships of colour, without calligraphy, texture or modelling; that the artist's eye — her hand being handed over to others — is the sole instrument of her skill; and that concentration and practice have made it an instrument of such accuracy that the ordinary eye does not readily see what for the artist may be a victory, a defeat, a check or a phase of the engagement to be broken off while the attack is pressed elsewhere.

These two exhibitions represent phases which are so out of key with each other that the paintings cannot be hung in the same gallery. The earlier phase, at the Warwick, deploys mainly soft colours in acrylic which are twisted round one another to form rippling stripes, sometimes laid horizontally and aired with white intervals, as in the two *Summer's Day* paintings, more often vertically and with either grey intervals or none. The interactions of the colours are further complicated by the rhythmic curves of the stripes so that waves and bursts of activity are released on the diagonal as well as up and down and from side to side. *Song of Orpheus*, for example, is composed of twists of green, pink, yellow, pale blue and lilac but becomes at a distance a green haze filled with buds or explosions of blue cooling orange and orange burning blue.

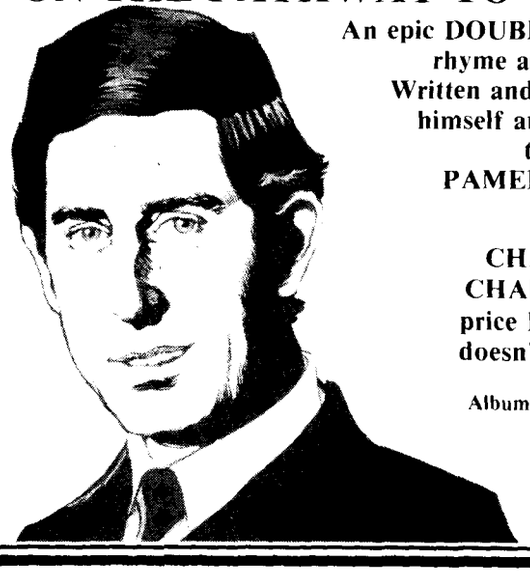
In 1979 Riley visited Egypt. The tomb paintings she saw there gave her the five basic colours for her most recent phase. The finished paintings at the Rowan are done in oil, not acrylic, and the stripes are once more straight. Black and white return as bar-lines and intervals, since the colours are so rich and strong that they require a strict regime of both discipline and relaxation. For if the Warwick paintings are concerned with lightness and movement, a latter-day impressionism in a northern light, these Rowan paintings are symphonic, equatorial. Their contrasts and coalescences are bold and glaring: ice blue stands next to blazing orange; yellow and red melt together. There are also softer effects — green, pink and a paler yellow (where turquoise, red or yellow is laid against blue and white) — though they would not seem soft in the context of the Warwick paintings.

It is hard to write about Riley's work in a language which has never felt the need for exact colour-words — rather like trying to discuss modern physics in Latin — and one inevitably suggests the familiar, the beautiful, the romantic. These elements are all present, of course, and account for her popularity, but they are nothing beside the newness. No painter has ever used his/her eye quite like this before and it will take time to understand what precisely she has seen. As Ruskin said to Turner, 'the worst of your paintings is one can never see enough of them'.

CLIVE JAMES

CLIVE!....CHARLES!....DOUBLE!!

CLIVE JAMES reveals all in.....
CHARLES CHARMING'S CHALLENGES
ON THE PATHWAY TO THE THRONE



An epic DOUBLE ALBUM of dazzling rhyme and humorous invention. Written and narrated by Mr. James himself and poetically assisted by the awesome mimicry of PAMELA STEPHENSON and RUSSELL DAVIES...

CHARLES CHARMING'S CHALLENGES... the special price DOUBLE ALBUM that doesn't cost a King's ransom.

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Album: DLART 3 Cassette: TLART 3

And as a book published by Jonathan Cape at £4.95.

Stage show at the Apollo until July 4th

ARISTA

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Weekend competition

No 2672 **Set by F. R. Spofforth**

There's an old Whitehall joke to the effect that CMG stands for Call Me God, KCMG for Kindly Call Me God and GCMG for God Calls Me God. Once you've scanned the honours list in your newspaper this weekend put pen to paper and come up with entertaining and *apt* interpretations of the initials behind the gongs. The three abbreviations already mentioned aren't excluded. Up to six shots by 26 June.

No 2669 **Set by G. L. Jessop**

Entries that were unaccountably left out of the new book Makers of Modern Culture.

Report **By Toby Jugge**

Riding on this one was, of course, the volume in question, edited by Justin Wintle, selling at £12.50 and most generously donated to the Complex by those grand sponsors of the arts Messrs Routledge and Kegan Paul. Many of you plumped for Lady Diana's *step-grandmother, but most of* these were more concerned with the events of recent weeks (That Invitation) than with the lady's lasting contributions to culture. Wintles go to all entries printed below.

Savalas, Aristoteles ('Telly'): This Greek-American product of New York's public schools, whose defiantly, even aggressively, hairless dome reflects the human condition — we can be said to see ourselves in it as we seek ourselves in the TV screen — sums up in his Kojak-persona the primal *nostalgie de l'enfance* to which we are all subject. His lollipops, his perched, too-small hats, and his constant question, 'Who loves ya, baby?' all project the universal urge to return to the more caring, protective environment associated by many with childhood, and bring to full realisation the simple — but not simplistic — *Weltanschauung* which desires simultaneous retention of the powers and privileges of the adult state. Rejecting little, accepting almost everything, Savalas/Kojak carries more than the sere wisdom of his ancient philosopher namesake. He expresses that dream-America (like L.P. Hartley's past, a 'foreign country', where 'they do things differently') in which we all once lived. SUSAN H. LLEWELLYN

Ogden, Stan and Hilda: It is as representatives of that ur-proletariat unwarmed even by the brief, specious sun of Galbraithian (*qv*) affluence that the Ogdens make up a distinctively tinted patch on the complex quilt of modern culture. Armed only with a shrill, pre-permissive net-curtain morality, Hilda thrashes eternally about to compel the respect forever denied her; while Stan's dispirited indictments of society's inequity lack, in their sad incoherence, even the saving lunacy of Garnettian (*qv*) rhetoric. Their role as irredeemable underdogs is symbolically discharged through Hilda's ubiquitous curlers. Significantly enough, whenever she discards them (only once, on average, in every 19¾ episodes) the 'gala' occasion invariably proves a comedown — if not a positive calamity; while the scene (screened in late '81) when she goes totally bald after patronising the hair-clinic set up as a side-line by Bet Lynch predicates, only too plainly, the final denudation of working-class hopes at the very nadir of Thatcherism (*qv*). MARTIN FAGG

Freeman, Alan: Single-handedly responsible for the orthodontic boom in Britain, Mr Freeman was also vital in establishing the intrinsic viability of palindromic cleansing agents. But his more important contributions to modern culture arose from his breaking of previously uncharted philological territory and his challenge to the established Church. His coinage of 'pop-pickers', prefaced by the archaic but Marxist style of address 'Greetings', was most notable. Most influential, however, was his secularisation of the hour between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Sundays. This revolution paved the way for Sunday football, Sunday trading, and inspired the bishops to produce the New English Bible — a challenge Mr Freeman met and defeated. He also altered patterns of teenage digestion, by retarding the Sunday evening meal, and hence abolishing Sunday 'tea', an institution previously thought unchallengeable. BILL GREENWELL

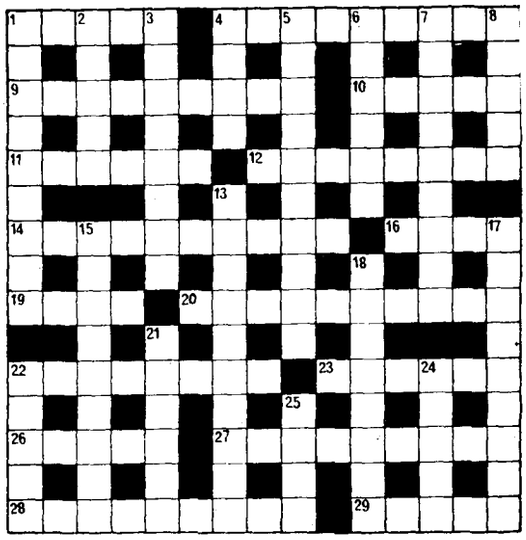
Kilroy: Founder of the Sub-Minimal, Enigmatic Genre of Mural Art, an art-form as subtle as its acronym. With a burning desire to leave his mark on society, Kilroy devoted his early years to mastering the intriguing skills of reproducing the six characters of his name in their correct order. Determined to miss no opportunity to practise his art, soon became obsessed with the problem of working one-handed on a vertical surface without wetting a trouserleg. Not satisfied with mere virtuosity, he searched for the missing element — popular acclaim — and was rewarded when, in a stroke of pure genius, he added the elegant contrapuntal motif 'was here'. Early complete works — usually in pencil or crayon on a simple off-white background — are now very rare; but modern copies, often in felt-tip or spray-paint, are on display worldwide. MILES MACLEOD

Ewing, J. R.: Son of Jock (*qv*) and Miss Ellie (*qv*), brother of Bobby (*qv*), husband of Sue-Ellen (*qv*) and father of John Ross (*qv*), JR incarnates a significant tendency in late twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon culture — that of the alienating, rather than the alienated, hero. Whether seen as corporate oligarch, victim of satyriasis or 'key signifier of the site of contradictions' (MacCabe (*qv*)), JR is located at the interface of three crucial modern areas of concern: the politics of oil production, the family problematic, and the ill-executed assassination attempt (see Reagan, R., and Paul, John). But above all it is JR the practical philosopher who merits serious attention. In his rigorous and fully theorised application of a pugnacious solipsism, he is at once the principal exponent of a deepgoing contemporary mood and the heir of Stirner (*qv*). BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Howerd, Frankie: He is, more validly than the term is often applied (e.g. to Chaplin, acrobatic clown extraordinary), a paradigm of the common man, *homo vulgaris*. His method of 'making himself comfortable', a swift twitch of the scrotum, simultaneously asserting and excusing the socially unacceptable aspects of man's libido, is a gesture appropriate to a suburban, post-Freudian anti-hero. His knowingness, his 'significant' oeillades, his ritual-obsessive repetition of the prolonged 'oohs' and 'aahs' (an inarticulate commentary on his condition), the cowardly verbal sniping at his (deaf) accompanist, combine to reveal to us, the viewer, the impotence of our plight in a nuclear society, where knowledge is fear and comment meaningless. But by his vulnerability to his audience, this genius of the ordinary most uncovers us to ourselves, conditioning in us a compassionate response we cannot inhibit, whereby he demonstrates the potential of our seemingly deadened humanity. GERARD BENSON

Weekend Crossword 1385

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1385, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 23 June.



ACROSS

1 *Burden which makes a* vehicle move (5)
4 Bounds back like a great tennis player in endless danger (9)
9 Postboy carries letters with one symbol of Britain on (9)
10 Hunter goes on about American city (5)
11 The goddess redistributes tithes (6)
12 Respect the time in changing the event (8)
14 Did Stalin ever translate it? (5,5)
16 People with high class list (4)
19 Gold carried by you in ancient times (4)
20 Flourished although it is the kind of goods I abandon (10)
22 Flattened as a shelter after snow starts (8)
23 Cargo thrown away so planes are before time (6)
26 A conductor spends a morning behind this tree (5)
27 Getting better with a devil wandering about (9)
28 Ends with great confusion when cut off (9)
29 One who has an army holds soldiers in terror (5)

DOWN

1 Excellently for international with one match (9)
2 Tea girl (5)
3 Views of a duck with feathers on (8)
4 Line for which cheat gets a return (4)
5 Reducing although opposed to studies in gravity (10)
6 Caught with intimate friend, seen in field (6)
7 Make Hazel bite another girl (9)
8 Three-directional wisdom? (5)
13 Getting the news about X is encourageing (10)
15 'Who will free me from this — priest? *(Henry II)* (9)
17 Not hurt, and the reverse of what makes mother old (9)
18 Film place where one languished when about to make love (8)
21 Shaking mat has caused illness (6)
22 Black is employable given upper-class leadership (5)
24 'They are all fire and every one doth —' *J. Caesar)* (5)
25 Copied in shape desired (4)

Solution to Salamanca 42

B	I	L	B	O	S	N	E	A	K	U	P			
A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N	P	N	P	E			
S	K	E	O	L	H	A	F	R	O	S	T			
O	R	A	N	G	E	F	L	O	W	E	R			
C	M	R	C	A	R	I	N	N	A	T	E			
H	A	L	O	S	Z	O	I	S	I	T	E			
E	Y	E	B	R	O	W	O	T	H	E	R			
S	T	R	U	N	T	E	U	R	T	R	I			
C	R	I	S	P	I	N	G	I	R	O	N			
R	E	N	T	E	M	I	L	N	I	X	Y			
E	E	S	E	M	I	T	I	G	A	T	E			
E	S	T	R	A	D	E	E	S	S	E	S			

Winners to Salamanca 42

Mrs M. F. Stevens (Bournemouth)
David Wendon (Lowestoft)
Mrs M. F. Main (Birmingham)

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Telex — 28449.
To reply to a Box, write to: Box No ..... at the above address.

Appointments

Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Posts in corporate and financial development and research.

The task—

To provide a central research, information and support system to Members of a progressive and active Local Authority committed to the improvement of its services.
To assist in the co-ordination and development of initiatives from other Council Departments towards the Council's declared policies contained in the Walsall Borough Labour Party Policy Document adopted by the Council in July 1980.
To monitor and review the implementation of policies.
To assist and support Members in the formulation of new policies.

The posts—

2 CORPORATE RESEARCH OFFICERS

in the Corporate Planning Unit of the Chief Executive and Town Clerk's Department P.O.1 (3-7), (£8,880-£9,861).

2 PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTANTS

in the Treasurer's Department P.O.1 (6-10), (£9,576-£10,731).

1 CORPORATE PLANNING ASSISTANT

in the Corporate Planning Unit of the Chief Executive and Town Clerk's Department Trainee/A.P. 3/4, (£3,918-£6,651).

All applicants should—

Have creative flexible approaches to problems.
Be able to establish sound working relationships with professionals from other Council Departments.
Demonstrate a commitment to the maintenance of independent Local Government.
Have some knowledge of the scope of local government activity.
Preferably have experience of working within a democratically controlled organisation or in an international situation.

Applicants for Corporate Research Officers should—

Have research experience and an ability to analyse and collate statistics.
Be able to grasp issues and problems rapidly and develop ideas into practical proposals for Members' consideration.

Applicants for Principal Accountants should—

Have a good Economics or Finance qualification.
Be able to develop the research function of the Treasurer's Department.
Be able to analyse alternative strategies.
Seek to develop budgeting and financial information systems.

Applicants for Corporate Planning Assistant should—

Have an appropriate academic qualification or have worked within a democratically controlled organisation in a research or administrative post.
An adaptable and capable personality.

For the posts in the Corporate Planning Unit, further particulars and application forms should be obtained from:
Chief Executive and Town Clerk, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Civic Centre, Darwall Street, Walsall, WS1 1TP.
Telephone Walsall 21244, (ext. 2071)

For the posts in the Treasurer's Department, further particulars and application forms should be obtained from:
The Treasurer, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, The Council House, Walsall,
Telephone Walsall 21244 (ext. 2864)

Closing date: 30th June 1981.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER.

Walsall Metropolitan Borough

Summer Playscheme Staff Needed

The Winchester Project, situated in Swiss Cottage, London NW3, is looking for staff for its summer playscheme.

We need people with skills in Arts & Crafts, Theatre/Drama, Photography, Sports & Outdoor Activities.

2 particular areas we need people for:

★ To help build up & develop adventure play area.

★ FA coach to organise training & matches, plus help prepare for oncoming season.

Relevant experience preferable, but equally important are energy and lively imagination. Also interest in our ongoing youth work. Driving licence helpful.

Rate of pay: £80 p.w. (net).
Closing date: **26/6/81.**

Apply in writing, giving details to:

The Winchester Project, 77 Eton Avenue, London NW3. (enclose S.A.E.)

The ALBANY,

a community work centre in Deptford, South East London,
requires a

PART-TIME FINANCE OFFICER

three days per week.
Experience essential.

Duties include not only daily book-keeping but, more importantly, grant applications and negotiations with statutory authorities.

Full details from Sue Power on 01-692 0231.
Closing date for completed applications 3 July.

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DIRECTOR, CHRISTIAN AID

Applications are invited for this senior post which falls vacant on the retirement of Rev. Dr Kenneth Slack in July 1982.

The person appointed must be a leader with administrative capacity, proved ability in speech and writing, an understanding of the theological basis of Christian Aid's work and of development issues and the capacity to lead a staff of 130.

The applicant must be a member in good standing of one of the churches in membership with the Council of which the Director is an Assistant General Secretary.

Application forms and further details are available from:

The General Secretary,
British Council of Churches,
2 Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BL

Closing date for completed application forms to be submitted:
28 August 1981

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Replies in confidence to: Box 1606

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required for

VOLUNTARY ACTION LEWISHAM

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The post requires initiative, imagination, organising ability, and a high degree of flexibility. A certain amount of evening work is inevitable.

Salary PO1 (4-8) plus Outer London Weighting, ie. **£9,066-£10,182 plus £483.**

Details and application form from:

David Mason, 120 Rushey Green, London SE6 4HQ. Tel: 690 4343 ext. 366.
Closing date: 29 June 1981.

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SENIOR NATIONAL OFFICER

operating in accordance with Association policies as determined by the General Assembly, the successful applicant will have overall responsibility for the organisation and integration of the Industrial Relations functions and the Administrative functions of the NUMA Central Office and the day-to-day direction and supervision of two other full-time employees.

He/She will report directly to the Executive Committee of the Association which represents 4-5,000 members in 40 Branches throughout the UK.

This new full-time appointment based initially in London will carry a starting salary in the range **£10,000-£12,000** depending on age, qualifications and experience.

Please apply in writing enclosing detailed C.V. and two references to:
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Application forms from: **the Graduate Secretary, School of Law, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL** to be returned no later than **1 July.**

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AMAZING Body-Mastery Secrets. Men for exceptional stamina, send s.a.e. to: Pagest, 42 Bertie Road, London NW10.

ATTRACTIVE LADY, small, slim, interested languages, dancing, gardening etc. London area, sks genuine, intelligent, unatt. male, with car, 48-60, for friendship, possibly marriage. Tel. no. small photo (returned) appreciated. Box 1569.

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ATTRACTIVE POST-GRAD. (f. 33), with children, London home; interested theatre/literature/good living seeks sincere, established, intellectual male, over forty, for loving, hopefully lasting relationship. Box 1568.

AWARE, attractive, caring female, late 30s, 5ft 7", resident London, sks man of intelligence, integrity and warmth. Box 1566.

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DEAR STRANGER, are you the man I am looking for? I am female (40), living in London, professional, attractive, tall and love music, food, books, conversation and countryside. Do get in touch. Box 1585.

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ATTRACTIVE, liberated, feminine divorcee, mid 40s, seeks tall, professional, romantic, humorous male, with open outlook, for light-hearted outings, Yorkshire area. Box 1530.

BOOKISH, balanced, married woman, good company but few friends, mid forties, slim, considered reasonably attractive, seeks man, possibly academic for conversation, occasional outings theatres, concerts. London or South Kent. Box 1532.

BRIGHT, vital divorcee, 43, London based would like to meet an educated, congenial, male companion, for theatre visits, walks and mutual moral support. Likes lively conversation, plants, travel and cooking. Box 1523.

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Meetings

AFGHANISTAN – WHICH WAY TOWARDS SOCIALISM? Debate between Ron Brown MP and Sean Matganna (Socialist Organiser). The Blue Blanket, Royal Mile, Edinburgh. 2 p.m. Sat. 13 June.

A NATIONAL CONVENTION of Black Teachers. Sat. 20 June 10.30-4.30 p.m. At Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Adult Committee of Black Teachers.

ICA EVENTS. The Mall, London SW1. 16 June 7.30 Second in the series of 6 evenings entitled 'The Poet as Historical Witness' with Edward Kamau Brathwaite and Linton Kwesi Johnson. Tickets £1.00 (ICA Day M'ship 40p). 930 3647.

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MAKE A DATE for Yoga talks at 7.30 p.m. on 18 June (Meditation on the inner Self) and 25 June (Inspiration) at Kensington Library, Campden Hill Road, W8. Includes group practice of meditation. Details from Shanti Sadan, 727 7846.

'NORTHERN IRELAND – Bi-partisanship'. Central London Fabian Society's next meeting will be addressed by Ernie Roberts MP on 17 June 7.30 p.m. at Mary Ward House, Tavistock Place, WC1. All law abiders welcome.

POLITICS AND POWER open meeting. Feminism and socialism. Thursday 18 June 7 p.m. Polytechnic of Central London, New Cavendish Street.

PROTEST AND SURVIVE: issues in nuclear armament and disarmament. Tutor: Dan Smith. Six meetings from 18 June 6.30-8.30. Also courses on Alternatives to Nuclear Power, History of the International, Politics through Games, and The Population Problem. City Lit Centre for Adult Studies, Stukeley Street, Drury Lane, WC2B 5LJ. 242 9872.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries 06285 26464.

SPAIN: THE THREAT TO DEMOCRACY. Monday 15 June 8.15 p.m. at Muswell Hill Library, Queen's Ave, London N10. Socialist Party of Great Britain.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme. Sun 14 June 8 p.m. Open Q/A Meeting. 'Psychic Powers and Hazards'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

WILFRED BURCHETT: *Reports on* Vietnam and Kampuchea for Medical Aid Vitamin and Milk *Campaign for Children of Vietnam.* Monday 15 June 7.30 p.m. Committee Room 8, House of Commons, booked in name of Ernie Ross MP.

YOUNG FABIAN *Meeting:* 13 June at 11 a.m. 11 *Dartmouth Street.* 'Parliamentary Control of The Judiciary', with Lord Salmon, John Morris QC, MP, Michael Zander, Derek Wood QC.

Conferences

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